Chapter 1

**Introduction**

Good day to you all, your story teller today is Tinaua Ioane, I come from Tabokao village on the island of Butaritari, from the Maneaba (Clan or House) of Kabubuarengana, a story teller from Butaritari. No other person may speak about geneology or mythological stories from Butaritari but the people of this clan.

I am the last person left to tell these stories – and I am doing so for my child Nei Rosa who is living in Darwin, Australia. She asked me to do a recording of these stories for her listening pleasure in her home in Darwin, Australia.

The stories begin from our ancestors the spirits through to the present generation of myself and Nei Rosa, daughter of Irima and Edward Muller.
Chapter 2

The Separation of Earth and Sky

Let me start off with the story of the separation or the splitting of the sky from earth – (Eutan Karawa). It was once thought that the sky lay over earth like an upside down clam shell (or dome) trapping people inside it (Te Bo-ma-te-Maki – joined and closed). Inside there was darkness and the people were noisy and blind (hence the original name of our islands Tungaru). They were just lying around inside propping up the sky. One of these people, the tallest amongst them was Riiki (Riiki the Eel), who had a body like a very long rope, twisting around filling holes all over the ground. One day the people realised this unique physical characteristic would be useful and asked Riiki to lift up the sky, for he was the only person capable of doing so. He agreed and with their help he began to push the sky upwards and when they could not reach any higher he continued alone...

(Here are some of the characters essential to these stories – Nei Kika (Octopus), Na Banaa (Voice), Taninga-ni-kauongo (The Ear or Man that Hears Everything), Auriaria and so on. Amongst them, was another man called Na Utonga who possessed a canoe (waa).

While Riiki stretched himself upwards higher and higher and the people could not reach up any more they called out some magic words to encourage and assist him to go on:

*Maua nako tia nako e!*
(Let us heave altogether now!)

*Maua nako tia nako e!*
(Let us heave altogether now!)

Riiki kept pushing until they couldn’t hear him any more from way down below. However, his body was still not stretched out fully yet. He asked them if that was high enough but no one could hear him except a fellow called Taninga-ni-kauongo (The Man Who Hears Everything), the son of Tabakea: for inside this Bo-ma-te-Maki were also Tabakea, Bakoa, Na Atibu and many others, but only Taninga-ni-kauongo amongst them was able to hear him. He passed Riiki’s message to them to ask if that height was enough and they said no, he needed to push up further. Riiki was so high up that he could not hear Taninga-ni-kauongo’s words so a man called Na Banaa (the Voice) was asked to relay messages to him: he shouted: “push some more”.

While Riiki was straining himself pushing the sky up, he became hungry and said he could not keep going because the sky was so high and heavy and he was loosing strength. Taninga-ni-kauongo heard him so he asked Na Baana to tell him they would give him two legs from Nei Kika (for Nei Kika – the Octopus – originally had ten legs) so they cut two legs from Nei Kika and threw them up to him. They told him he had to push until his tail was fully stretched out and while he did so they hit his tail towards one side of the sky where it remains to this day, like a pillar in the sky, called Na Iabu (the Milky Way).
Chapter 3

Nareau the Creator

Amongst these people also was a god called Nareau. When the sky was finally in place he flew to live on top of Te Bo-ma-te-Maki. One day, while happily living there, a huge pimple appeared on his forehead, and when it burst, out of it came Nareau the Second; another pimple appeared on top of his head and this produced Nareau the Third. The original Nareau was known as Te Mauri (Luck), Nareau the Second was Te Raoi (Peace) and Nareau the Third became known as Te Tabomoa (Honour). *(These iconic words can be seen on the flag of Kiribati today.)*

Nareau the Elder was also known as Nareau te Ti, the Second was Nareau te Ta and the third was Nareau te Kikitei – which means – the first was Nareau the Clever, *(Rabakau)* the second was Nareau the Intelligent *(Wanawana)* and the third was Nareau the Wise *(Ataibai)*. People inside the Bo-ma-te-Maki complained that it was very dark: Nareau the Clever who was also known as Nareau the Creator saw Na Atibu (Stone) sitting on the edge of the earth like a post so he gorged Na Atibu’s right eye out and threw it up where it became the Sun thus creating light. When the sun set, darkness came with nightfall so Nareau grabbed Na Atibu’s left eye and threw it to one side of the sky where it became the Moon and when he shook his bloodied hands to clean them, the droplets turned into the numerous stars in the sky.
Chapter 4

The Three Curses of Mankind

After this was completed Narea* (the Elder or Creator) decided to clean the top of the Bo-ma-te-Maki. When he finished sweeping all the rubbish off what looked like a clam shell, he threw them downwards. The people below saw this container of rubbish coming their way and they ran away for they feared what was inside this basket of rubbish: sickness, old age and death. They wanted to escape the three curses of mankind, and so they asked Na Utonga to take them in his canoe (waa) to places where there is no sickness, old age and death. On the way Rabaraba was dropped off at Rabaraba ni Karawa (Horizon), Mangkoa-ngkoa (In the Old Days or A Long Long Time Ago) jumped into the voice box of the people yelling out in fear of the basket of rubbish; Te Rabanga was dropped off with his wife Nei Teanti in Onouna. On its way to the north east the canoe left Nei Aibong somewhere in the middle of the ocean to welcome the souls of any death people coming by. (If you see a bright light on the seas in the early evening or midnight, a light so bright, you would know that Nei Aibong is busy receiving death people from everywhere.)

The canoe sailed northwards dropping people off and at Karawa-ni-makin unloaded Na Manemone and Nei Karikibaai. It went westwards until it sighted three islands: Aba-riaria ( Appearing islands), Aba-ewewe (Jumping islands) and Aba-non-nonako (Disappearing islands). Aba-riaria nowadays is known as Onne, Aba-ewewe – Kiebu and Aba-non-nonako is Makin. At Makin Nei Temanai and her son Nan Teikao were dropped off and at Aba-ewewe (Kiebu) Na Utonga dropped off Nan Teratibe and Nei Nikauki. The canoe then sailed southwards and came to Buariki in Tarawa where Na Utonga took his wife's hand and his son and went to Naa (a village in Buariki). He told the rest of the people on the canoe to find somewhere to escape to avoid the three curses – sickness, old age and death. When Na Utonga and his family arrived at Nabaroo it was already occupied by Na Baara (kingfish – acanthocybium solandri). As soon as Na Baara saw them he gobbled them up and they now live inside Na Baara to this day. They too escaped the three curses, just like Na Banaa (the Voice). Na Banaa jumped into people’s voice boxes when they were crying out in fear of the three curses in the basket (as mentioned previously) and we know he lives to this day when you cannot hear someone and you ask: “please let me hear your Voice for I can’t hear you” (taiaoka banam ba I aki ongo). Mangkoa-ngkoa (In the Old Days) also lives each time you say to somebody – “do you remember in the old days...” or a long long time ago ( Ko uringa ngkoa ngkoa, ke N taai ake rimoa) also lives.

The only people left at Buariki, originally known as Tebonobono on Tarawa (the site where the splitting of earth and the sky happened) were Bakoa and Tabakea.

If you ever go to Buariki (Tebonobono) you can find an old place called Eutan Karawa where the separation took place (even to this day).

Now we are going to take up the story of Tabakea (Land Turtle) and Bakoa (Shark). They both lived at Buariki (Tebonobono) in a maneaba called Te Ingungu n Tabakea – Tabakea on the western side and Bakoa on the eastern side. Tabakea’s wife was called Nei Nunikai and their son was called Taninga-nikauongo (The Man who hears Everything - the fellow that also lived in Te Bo-ma-te-Maki and Bakoa’s wife was Nei Wiriki and his children were: Bakoa Uea, Bakoa Un and Na Atia. Before I continue with the story of Bakoa and Tabakea, let me go back and talk a little about the contents of the basket (kite) of dirt that Nareau dropped down to earth.

There is no escaping them, we are forever cursed with sickness, old age and death and sometimes we become ill and die early. The people were trying to escape from them on Na Utonga’s canoe.
Chapter 5

Choosing a Kingdom

Now I continue the story. One day Bakoa asked Tabakea where he would like to settle and Tabakea said he would live on Land so Bakoa chose the Ocean. However, they continued to live side by side in the maneaba for a little while longer. According to their choices of territory, Bakoa became the ruler or king of all creatures in the ocean and Tabakea, all creatures on land. Some time later Tabakea decided he would go fishing for one of Bakoa’s creatures so he made a fishing scoop (nonou*) and off he went to catch a variety of fishes including the neveakabane (a species of wrasse). On his return Bakoa said to him,

“Tabakea, it looks like you are depleting my creatures, and by the way do you happen to have any neveakabane” and Tabakea said,

“Oh yes, about ten.”

“Would you set them aside for me please?”

Tabakea did and asked his wife, Nunikai to give them to Bakoa. Tabakea thought to himself, this guy seems to like the neveakabane. The next day he went fishing again to feed his wife and son, Taninga-ni-kauongo. Each time he came back from fishing, Bakoa would ask for the neveakabane. Eventually Tabakea became sick of fishing (nonou style) so he built a canoe for he wanted to catch yellow fin tuna (ingi mea). (By the way all the fishing knowledge that we now possess came from Tabakea.)
Chapter 6

**Battle of Champion Pets**

Another time Bakoa asked Tabakea to pick one of his creatures, the fastest of them all and he would select one of his and they would race them against each other. Bakoa chose the tau fish (a very fast fish, similar to a garfish but not seen nowadays) and Tabakea picked a crab (makauro)! They would race from an opening in the reef (matan rawa rawa) until the shore line. When the day for the race came, Tabakea picked three crabs and placed one at the water’s edge and told him to start crawling upwards, he took the second one along the reef, placed it at the midway mark and told him to start crawling. The last one he took to the opening at the edge of the reef. When he arrived, Bakoa was already waiting with his pet, the tau, and asked Tabakea,

“What is your pet?” and Tabakea replied,

“A crab”

Bakoa laughed mockingly because he knew his pet was so much faster than the crab. He didn’t realize that Tabakea’s first crab was already up the beach and the second was getting close to the water’s edge. Bakoa could not believe Tabakea’s choice of pet, laughed hoarsely and said

“Your champion will never reach the shore, let us release them and see who is the fastest.”

Meanwhile the tau was ready and raring to go; it almost could not contain itself. When the start was called, off they went and Bakoa said mockingly once again,

“Tabakea where is your pet now?” and Tabakea said,

“There it is, its going ashore!” and Bakoa said incredulously,

“Would you call out to him?” and Tabakea called out,

“Na Makauro!” and the crab replied “O-o-o!

“Do you see him then, he has just replied and look his shell is shining in the sun!”

Bakoa was very angry and could not believe the crab would be that fast. Meanwhile the third crab was getting close to the midway mark and the second was just about to hit the beach. They brought their pets back to starting point again – Naako uee! (Ready set go!) and released them. Bakoa asked again,

“Where’s your pet?” Tabakea said,

“There he is going ashore” and Bakoa said,

“Can you call out to him?”

“Na Makuro!”
“O-o-o!” said the crab.

Bakoa was angry and frustrated and said,

“This is the last race” while the third crab was getting close to the beach. Bakoa asked Tabakea once again,

“Where’s your champion?” and Tabakea said,

“There he is crawling ashore!”

“Can you call out to him?”

“Na Makurol”,

“O-o-o!”. 

Bakoa seemed to graciously accept his defeat in all three races and they continued to live together in the maneaba at Tebonobono.
Chapter 7

Tabakea Infuriates Bakoa

Bakoa was lord of everything in the ocean but Tabakea continued to fish (nonou) the reef catching plenty of fishes. One day Bakoa said to him,

“Nao (Man) you are taking lots of my creatures and by the way do you have any neveakabane?” Tabakea said,

“Yes probably fourteen or fifteen” and handed them over to Bakoa.

Another time Bakoa said to Tabakea,

“Tabakea, do you think you could trap those pets of mine the inai (a type of parrot fish) out there on the reef?” and Tabakea said,

“Yes I’ll try” and began to make a fishing net out of coconut fibre to the size of the parrot fish. When it was ready he spread the net out and the fishes jumped straight into it. He brought the net (full of fish) back near the maneaba and said to Bakoa,

“These are your pets that you thought I’ll never catch”.

Next Bakoa suggested he catches the giant mullet (aua maran), so Tabakea went off to sew a fishing net suitable for mullets. He set the net behind some rocks and the fishes were drawn into it. He showed them to Bakoa and Bakoa said,

“Man, you are killing all my pets – now you’ve caught the mullets!”

This time Tabakea said to Bakoa:

“What about you, are you able to catch my birds there on the rocks (sandpipers and golden pacific plovers)?” and Bakoa said,

“I’ll try – give me one of your fishing nets” and with that he dropped the net behind the rocks where the birds were, and when he showed them the net, they all flew up into the sky.

This is the second time Bakoa was defeated. (Bakoa could not trap Tabakea’s birds because they won’t go into the fishing net, they would fly upwards.)

Later Tabakea asked his birds to show him the sites where yellow fin tuna abound – this is how we know today when birds hover over a certain area we know there is a lot of fish there (all our knowledge about making fish nets and deep sea fishing came down to us from Tabakea). He then told Bakoa he was going to catch his creature, the yellow fin tuna; so he set himself up with a fishing line of zennit, launched his canoe and took suitable fish bait and off he went in search of the tell-tale birds. Tuna fish was teeming everywhere, he caught one and two of the biggest and by the third his canoe was sinking so he headed home. He showed them to Bakoa –
“Look, I’ve got the biggest of your tuna creatures”. The next day he repeated the same thing and Bakoa got angrier and angrier.
Chapter 8

Bakoa becomes Shark

One day when he went fishing again, angry Bakoa followed him. Tabakea was surprised when he pulled a fish up and a shark suddenly appeared, snapped the line and ate the tuna. He knew straight away it was Bakoa in his fishy form. Tabakea quickly packed up and headed home but Bakoa was already ashore shaking his wet head by the maneaba. Tabakea asked his wife Nunikai –

“Did you see this man arrive before me?” and she replied,

“Yes, he has just come from the sea, shaking his wet hair”.

“That’s it, I knew it was him that followed me and broke my line. Look, I want you to make me the strongest zennit line, double-weave them over each other (te kanoten)”.

And he went off to carve himself the strongest hook (te ngea) from the ngea tree (*pemphis scidula*). (The large hook known in Kiribati as te ngea came from Tabakea’s hook.)

Once he had his hook attached to the line and ready, he went first to nonou to catch his bait, the neveakabane, and Bakoa’s absolute favorite food. Without Bakoa seeing him he hid his special line in the canoe. He then collected his usual fishing line, picked up the canoe and headed to the water. Bakoa asked him,

“Where are you off to Tabakea?” and Tabakea replied

“Ao*, I’m going to find my birds that show me where your tuna creatures are” and Bakoa secretly followed him. Tabakea was happily fishing again, when; suddenly a shark appeared, broke the line and ate the bait. Tabakea knew it was Bakoa and immediately put his strong line with the neveakabane bait attached, in the deep water. As soon as Bakoa saw his favourite meal, he could not resist - he gobbled the line, the hook and bait straight away. Tabakea fed him the line until he was sure that Bakoa had no chance of escaping, and then he yanked. Bakoa was caught on the jawbone and the sharp pointed end came out on the side of his mouth. As Bakoa dived deeper into the ocean, trying to break the line (but there was no way of breaking such a strong line and ngea hook) Tabakea pulled his line up and said to himself:

**E a bo te tai, e a roko am bong**
**Nna waerake ngkana ko reke ao nna kaniko!**

The time has come, this is your day
When I catch you I’m taking you ashore to eat you!

When Bakoa came close to the waa, Tabakea bashed him on the head once: Bakoa quickly dived down again struggling with all his might to get rid of the hook but as he no longer had his arms because he was now in his fishy form there was not much he could do. Tabakea pulled him up again and hit his head a second time. Bakoa knew this was his last chance for survival so as he dived he bent his body, curled his tail to wind the line around it and when he stretched himself out the line finally broke off. (*It is believed that the tension of Tabakea’s line when Bakoa was trying to break it caused the split in the shark’s tail.)*

Tabakea said “Ah, you are so lucky!”
Bakoa quickly swam ashore and when he reached the edge of the reef (buki ni waiwai) he transformed himself back again into a human/spirit form: pulled the hook out of his mouth, nursed his wounded jaw and laid down under a mat on his side of the maneaba. His wife Nei Wiriki asked him,

“What happened to you Bakoa?” and he replied:

“I’ve nearly had it from that fellow; he caught me by the jaw”.

Not long after Tabakea arrived and said to his wife,

“Nunikai, what a pity, we almost had a nice delicious meal of a huge “big man” fish, we would have chopped it up and baked it, such a meaty scrumptious fish!”

Bakoa could hear everything from underneath his cover. Some time later when his wound was healed, Bakoa sat facing Tabakea and said to him,

“Tabakea, I am leaving to go to my chosen abode the Ocean and you can stay here on Land but let me promise you something: if I ever find you in my territory the Ocean, I will eat you, you and all your creatures, that is my steadfast promise to you”.

Tabakea replied,

“And I will do the same to you; if I catch you and all your creatures I shall eat you all!”

That is why to this day we eat all the shell fish on the reef and fish we catch and the shark is for ever preying on human life. As soon as this exchange was over, Bakoa took his wife; gathered his belongings and went to live in the abyss in the bottom of the Ocean in a place called Mone.

Bakoa and Wiriki made their home in Mone and had three sons: Bakoa Uea, the second was Bakoa Un and the last was Na Atia. Bakoa Uea married Nei Naouea and they had a son called Na Tababa (what we know today as the tiger shark); Bakoa Un married Nei Naobaake and had two sons, Na Rokea (another vicious species of shark) and Na Anoi (the hammerhead shark). Na Atia, the youngest, married Nei Kereboki and their children were Toau and Takabure.

They lived together and multiplied into so many species of sharks descended from the original Bakoa, who was half spirit/half human. Everyone in this story so far is half spirit and half human (anti ma aomata).

When Bakoa left to live in the Ocean (marawa) he took away with him a magic potion (baan te ika) which traps us humans into craving fish, so we go fishing and our canoes may end up capsizing and then we are caught by Bakoa.
Chapter 9

Incestuous Toau and Takabure

While living down below in Mone, Bakoa’s youngest son Na Atia and his wife Nei Kereboki had a son called Toau and a daughter Takabure. These two formed an incestuous relationship and when Bakoa heard that Takabure was pregnant with his grandchild, he was extremely angry and wanted to kill them. Toau and Takabure ran away and when they reached a part of the seas where there was a little bit of light, just below Samoa, Takabure gave birth to te Aong. Swimming further up to where the seas were even lighter she gave birth to another son, te Awai and when they arrived where there was plenty of light she gave birth to te Ingo.

By this time Tabakea had left Buariki and was now living in Samoa. He told them not to come close to land nor settle where he was but to move to the end of southern Samoa (for he was ashamed of them). They moved on and had two more children – Nei Taaia and Nei Taaina.

A house was built for each of them and they were forbidden, by their parents, Toau and Takabure to visit each other. The sisters continued living this way without ever setting foot in each other’s home... (to be continued)

(When Tabakea arrived in Samoa he had another child whom he named, Nei Kimoauea (literally means Queen of the Rats) while her elder brother, Taninga-ni-kauongo, mentioned in the splitting of the sky from earth - Eutan Karawa, stayed in Buariki, Tarawa.)
Chapter 10

The Most Beautiful Woman in the World

Nei Kimoauea was born in Samoa, the sister of Taninga-ni-kauongo who was living in Tarawa. Whenever men went to the forest of Samoa she would appear to them in a flash of lightening, wearing a grass skirt made from darkened reeds and ferns. The men fainted at the sight of her great beauty and the fragrance of her grass skirt which had been treated with oils and herbs (kabwearaki). She was rumoured to be the most beautiful woman in the world. By the time the men awaken from their stupor Nei Kimoauea had disappeared. This happened so many times and news of her beauty started to spread around Samoa and they called her, Queen of Samoa, although nobody knew who she was or where she lived. (Her brother Taninga-ni-kauongo was still living in Tebonobono, Tarawa at this time.)
Chapter 11

Suicidal Taaina

Now we return to the story of the daughters of the incestuous couple, Toau and Takabure, Nei Taaiia and Nei Taaina, who were living in separate houses. The parents took them food everyday and Taaiia received the better food while Taaina got inferior meals.

One day Nei Taaiia asked her sister to visit her to brush her hair and Taaina reminded her of their parents’ rule. Taaiia said not worry for they would be quick so Nei Taaina came and when she entered Taaiia’s house she was in shock for everything was very beautiful – the mats were decorated intricately (kabure) while her own mats were woven from the coconut leaves (inaai). She now came to the realization that her parents did not love her as equally as her elder sister.

Later that day at about 4 or 5 o’clock in the afternoon, Nei Taaina swam out to sea to drown herself. While she was drifting along (you will remember previously I mentioned that Takabure gave birth to a son at the top level of the sea Na Ingo, her brother in fishy form) she came to where Na Ingo lived and he implored her to return home as the sun was setting and it was getting dark. She refused, and kept on going deeper and deeper into the ocean until she reached the home of her other brother, te Awai. He too told her to go back but she refused him as well and kept on going. Eventually she arrived at Na Aong’s place (the brother born during the escape from Bakoa’s wrath) and by now it was dark. Na Aong came to meet her and told her to go home but she refused again and kept going. Now she was getting tired and her arms were sore and she began to cry out for help from her grandfather Bakoa:

Iti ua ua iti ua uarake
Iti ua ua iti ua uario
Nna ua rio moa kangai ba
Nna atonga aran tibu are i nano Bakoa
Ma enga naba tamau
Na Tababa, Na Rokea, Na Anoi
Ba I aki maeu ba I a mate ngai o!

I am swimming westwards
I am swimming eastwards
I am swimming this way
I am calling the name of my grandfather below Bakoa
And where are my uncles
Na Tababa, Na Rokea, Na Anoi
I am no longer living, I am dying!

Bakoa heard her song of lament from his home down in Mone and he answered:
“Kakauongo riki buki ni benebene o” –
“Please repeat your cry”

so Nei Taaina cried out a second time,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I} & \text{ti} \ \text{ua} \ \text{ua} \ \text{iti} \ \text{ua} \ \text{uarake} \\
\text{I} & \text{ti} \ \text{ua} \ \text{ua} \ \text{iti} \ \text{ua} \ \text{uario} \\
\text{N} & \text{na} \ \text{ua} \ \text{rio} \ \text{moa} \ \text{kangai} \ \text{ba} \\
\text{N} & \text{na} \ \text{aron} \ \text{arito} \ \text{are} \ \text{I} \ \text{nano} \ \text{Bakoa} \\
\text{Ma} & \ \text{enga} \ \text{naba} \ \text{tama} \\
\text{Na} & \ \text{Tababa, Na} \ \text{Rokea, Na} \ \text{Anoi} \\
\text{Ba} & \ \text{I} \ \text{aki} \ \text{maeu} \ \text{ba} \ \text{I} \ \text{a} \ \text{mate} \ \text{ngai} \ \text{o!}
\end{align*}
\]

I am swimming westwards
I am swimming eastwards
I am swimming this way
I am calling the name of my grandfather below Bakoa
And where are my uncles
Na Tababa, Na Rokea, Na Anoi
I am no longer living, I am dying!

When she finished her second lament, Bakoa replied:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{E} \ \text{tangi} \ \text{maia} \ \text{te} \ \text{karongo} \ \text{aei} \\
\text{E} \ \text{tangi} \ \text{mai} \ \text{iaon} \ \text{te} \ \text{bike} \ \text{iroun} \ \text{Toau} \ \text{ma} \ \text{Takabure} \\
\text{A} \ \text{bure} \ \text{mani} \ \text{kien} \ \text{natia} \ \text{Nei Taaina} \\
\text{Me} \ \text{a} \ \text{riboriki} \ \text{nanoa} \\
\text{Me} \ \text{a} \ \text{kanaeng}, \ \text{me} \ \text{a} \ \text{betinako}
\end{align*}
\]

From whence does the cricket cry
From a beach by Toau and Takabure
Their sleeping mat produced Nei Taaina
She is very unhappy
She is running away, she is adrift

Nei Taaina heard this song and she repeated her cry for the third time:
I am swimming westwards
I am swimming eastwards
I am swimming this way
I am calling the name of my grandfather below Bakoa
And where are my uncles
Na Tababa, Na Rokea, Na Anoi
I am no longer living, I am dying!

Bakoa heard Nei Taaina’s cry for help and stopped Na Tababa and Na Rokea from going to eat her and asked Na Anoi to go and help her as she was getting weak and dying. Na Anoi, the hammerhead shark, is not a man eater and its hammer shaped head (like cross) was where Nei Taaina placed her feet when he rescued her. (It is believed that is how the hammerhead shark got its strange head.) Na Anoi said to her,

“Let’s find out from your grandfather where you are supposed to go”.

When Bakoa knew that Na Anoi was with Taaina he sang out telling him where he should take her:

I aki titiki mani maremare ngai o
Ba I tabe ni katanga te bu iroi iroi
I aoni Mone ikai a
I kakim ao I kabane ao tauwia
Na Tababa ma Na Rokea
I kanakoa Na Anoi be na ewekaiko nako
Ko a roko I Tarawa Ne!

I am not worried
I am sending a message
By blowing the conch shell
From Mone down here
To hold in check
Na Tababa and Na Rokea
I dispatch Na Anoi to carry you away
You have reached Tarawa!

Na Anoi said “Taaina you are to go Tarawa” and off he took her there (while she wound her feet round his head) and they arrived in Buariki (old Tebonobono) and he left her at the end of a fishing trap (naa) at round midnight. (Previously I mentioned that Tabakea’s eldest son, Taninga-ni-kauongo lived at Tebonobono). Taninga-ni-kauongo was sleeping but when Taaina arrived at his naa he became very restless and sleepless (nibara) and chanted:

E ta tang maia te karongo aei
E tang mai aon te bike ieta iroun Toau ma Takabure
A bure mani kien natia Nei Taaina
Mea riboriki nanona
Mea baka te kua i nanoni marawa
Kabutiko, kaoko Nei Taaina
Ma ko a roko!

From whence does the cricket cry
From a beach by Toau and Takabure
Their sleeping mat produced Nei Taaina
She is very unhappy
Like a whale she went into the ocean
Swimming by, Taaina was getting closer
Now she is here!

When he woke up from his dream, the sun was rising and as he looked towards his naa he saw a woman (Nei Taaina) sitting there so he went to her and said:

“Neiko so you are the reason why I was having a restless sleep (because you’re sitting on my naa) come with me let’s go to my house.” And she became his wife.
Chapter 12

Matua Brothers – Champions of Tarawa

Not long after, they then became parents to four sons - the first was Matua Kikina, (Matua the Identifier); the second was called Matua Tararara (Matua the Sleepless), the third was Matua Keniken (Matua the Digger or Excavator) and the last was Matua te Rang (Matua the Stupid). (Their father was Taninga-ni-kauong, the son of Tabakea and brother of Nei Kimoauea who was born in Samoa, as I related previously and their mother, Nei Taaina was the granddaughter of Bakoa who lived in Mone, a land below the ocean.)

There was once a tradition of fierce competition between Tarawa (Tebonobono) and Samoa, called Te Waa ni Kaborerei whereby the losers were killed by having their heads smashed with te ibibi n Tamoa or te ibibi n Tarawa, depending on which side was victorious. Fishermen usually went in teams of three men on a canoe, from Tarawa to Samoa for fishing competitions where they had to identify their competitors’ catch before they were landed and none of the young men from Tarawa ever returned. This fierce rivalry or war originated from a disagreement over which tree was the first or the foremost: the “Uekera” the third tree grew on Buariki, the second “Kaintikuaba” grew on Samoa but each land wanted its tree be the most important. The victor in this continuing battle to the death would have their tree become known as the first tree. There was no shortage of young men from Tarawa, going to war, they kept going in threes but none of them ever returned. They were all killed. Meanwhile the Matua brothers were practising and honing their fishing skills in readiness for a crack at this fishing competition.

The youngest brother, Matua te Rang often joined his brothers in these fishing expeditions. When his brother Matua Kikina made him bait out of a crab shell tied to a string, he didn’t even realize it was useless. How could he catch fish with bait so hard like that and no barb? He didn’t know because he was a complete idiot! He never caught a fish while his brothers were busy catching lots of fishes. But the ability of knowing how to identify the fishes before landing them was still eluding them.

On another fishing trip everything was the same as usual until Matua Te Rang became disillusioned and wondered,

“What sort of a hook have I got here?” but he kept going with his three brothers.
Chapter 13

Beloved Taaia

(Now let’s go back to the story of Nei Taina’s sister, the beloved Taaia who was left in Samoa.)

Nei Taaia married Kai-ni-kibakiba and had a son while in Samoa whom they called Taninga-n-Ongora (One who listens) (let me remind you listeners that there was a man called Taninga-ni-Kauongo (One who Hears Everything who was married to Nei Taaina, who was the son of Tabakea and Nunikai) and Taninga-n-Ongora (One who Listens, in Samoa, his mother was Nei Taaia the elder sister of Nei Taaina and his father was Kai-ni-kibakiba.) From Samoa Taninga-n-Ongora could hear the voices of Taaina’s children including Matua Kikina saying to their mother: “Taaina we are very hungry” and one day he said to his mother in Samoa, “Taaia, you used to tell me the story about your sister who left in unhappy circumstances (kanaeng)” and Taaia asked,

“And how did you hear about her?”

“I hear the calling of her name from Tarawa” said Taninga-n-Ongora, “you said she left in displeasure.”

“She must be living in Tarawa then”, said his mother.

Tania-n-Ongora often sailed his toy canoe (nikaririaki) in Samoan waters until one day he heard Taaina’s name being called again from Tarawa and he followed the voice until he arrived there. He kept playing with the Matua brothers who thought he was just a local boy without realizing that he was their cousin, the son of their aunt in Samoa. One evening when they returned home he followed and Taaina said to him,

“Boy, you must go home: its getting dark” but he didn’t, he just stood against a post of the house.

Taaina called to her children: “Dinner is ready” to Matua Kikina, Matua Taratara, Matua Keniken and Matua te Rang, and the boy was still standing there looking at them. Taaina looked back and said again,

“Boy, why don’t you go home, its dark” while her sons were eating, but he didn’t leave, where would he go, this was where he belonged, this was his mother’s sister, so he still stood there looking at them. Taaina then said:

“What is the matter, why don’t you go home, are you covetous (ngenge) of my children’s food?”

Tania-n-Ongora smiled, and Nei Taaina took a double take at his smile and thought to herself “his smile reminds me of the sister I left behind in Samoa, Nei Taaia” and asked the boy,

“Who is your father?” “Kai-ni-kibakiba”

“And your mother” “Nei Taaiia”

“Oh please forgive me”, Taaina cried and called to him, “I’m so sorry I didn’t recognize you, please come and join my sons” and she gave him food.
Chapter 14

The Magic Hook – Nan Tuanga (I command you)

Taninga n Ongora stayed a while with his cousins, often joining them in their games and fishing trainings sessions, where he would sit with Matua te Rang at aobai (the side of a canoe which is nearest to the outrigger) underneath an inaai (a mat woven from coconut leaves). On the canoe Matua Kikina sat at the bow, Matua Taratara in the middle and Matua Keniken at the stern. Matua te Rang carried on fishing with his useless nimatanin hook and bait and one day he got so frustrated with it that he decided to drop his line into the bottom of the ocean. He lowered it so far down to Mone below that Nei Wiriki (Bakoa’s wife) while sweeping outside her hut was surprised when a shell (nimatanin – Turbo setosus) tied to a string fell nearby. She thought it was a toy. She took it and put in the eaves of her hut. Meanwhile above the water it was time to leave so Matua Kikina told his brother to pull his line in. Matua Te Rang could not get it back, (for it was snagged on the eaves of Wiriki’s house). Matua Kikina was annoyed with his brother and told him to dive for it. So Matua Te Rang jumped overboard and dived for so long until suddenly he fell onto hard ground. The woman sweeping (his grandmother) was taken by surprise, looked back and said, “Nao, what are you doing here?”, and Matua Te Rang replied, “Neiko, I’ve come from above to get my fishing line but it’s stuck”.

Wiriki, his grandmother said: “Who made this fishing line for you?”

“My brother, Matua Kikina” and Wiriki said, “I think it’s because you’re an idiot! How can you fish with a line without a hook and the bait is a shell, you’re such a fool! Go hide in the cooking hut and wait for Bakoa, your grandfather’s return. When he comes you must ask him for a hook, but don’t go for just any hook that he will show you, you must ask for the one in his bottom!”

So off he went to hide. (Meanwhile his brothers were tired of waiting for him above the water in their canoe but could not leave him behind.) Late in the afternoon Bakoa returned from the bush and he straight away smelled something very delicious (its smell is equivalent to the delicious smell, to us humans on land, of a barbecued red emperor fish cooked on hot embers) and Bakoa asked his wife “Wiriki, do you have any special food?” and she replied, “Oh no, I don’t have anything special to eat.”

“Look, I can smell something different here, please tell me if you are hiding some delicious food, let me have some!”

But Wiriki insisted, “No, there is nothing different to eat”. Bakoa said, “Don’t lie to me, I can smell something new and different” and finally Wiriki admitted, “All right, yes, we have a visitor, your grandson Matua Te Rang”, and Bakoa asked, “Why did he come?” and Wiriki replied, “To retrieve his hook up there on the eaves, his line, hook and bait and how can he get a fish with a hook like that?”
“Ask him to come out” so Wiriki called out to Matua Te Rang and he came out from amongst the firewood. Bakoa told him to sit facing him and asked,

“Why did you come here?” and Matura Te Rang replied,

“I came looking for my hook stuck up there,”

“Who has ever fished with a hook and bait of a shell like that, who made it for you?” and Matua Te Rang replied,

“My brother, Matua Kikina”

“I think it’s because you’re an idiot called Matua Te Rang”, Bakoa hadn’t quite finished his words when Matua Te Rang blurted out,

“Can you give me a hook Bakoa please?” and Bakoa said,

“Ok, choose your hook” and in a blink of his eyes Matua Te Rang saw all types and sizes of hooks covering Bakoa’s entire body from head to toe, and said,

“Pick your hook from anywhere on my body”, and Matua Te Rang replied,

“I don’t like any of them”, so Bakoa opened his mouth wide to show him the hooks there and Matua Te Rang said he didn’t want those as well,

“What about these under my arms?”

“No, I don’t like them either.”

“So which one could you possibly want?” and Matua Te Rang replied,

“I want the one in your bottom?” Bakoa laughed and said,

“Who has ever had a hook in their bottom, but that’s fine, I’ll give it to you, but before I do that I want to tell you this because you are stupid, this hook is called Nan Tuanga” and as he pulled it out of his bottom and handed it to Matua Te Rang said,

“If you ask that hook for anything it will get it for you, and not just fishes but anything you ask it, and its name is Nan Tuanga” (which means “I command you” or “My word is your command”.)

When they finished Matua Te Rang hid the hook, untied his line from the eaves where Nei Wiriki tied it, winched himself up on it until he reached the water and appeared near the canoe where his brother Matua Kikina scolded him saying,

“What took you so long?” and Matua Te Rang said,

“I was trying to untie my line” and hid his new hook, Nan Tuanga, from his brother.
"Come aboard so we can return home".
Setting Sail for Samoa

They returned to their home in Tebonobono and Matua Te Rang spent a lot of time with Taninga-n-Ongoro. On another fishing trip the two of them covered themselves up again with the inai on the aobai and Matua Te Rang said to his cousin,

“Nao, Taninga-n-Ongora come take a look at this hook, I’ll replace it with the shell” as he undid the shell bait and replaced it with the magic hook and said to it,

“You go and find me a fish that does not require bait” and the hook went and found the fish. He pulled it and threw it into the canoe. His brothers saw the fish, were surprised and they looked at each other. Again he landed another one. His brother Matua Kikina said to him,

“Matua Te Rang what sort of hook are you using to catch these kind of fishes, please let me see it,” and Matua Te Rang showed it to him saying,

“Bakoa gave me that hook when I went down to Mone to get my hook and its name is Nan Tuanga, if you tell it to get anything you want it will get it”.

Matua Kikina was so happy because he now knew that they were finally ready to go and compete or against their Samoan rivals.

They returned home and Matua Kikina showed the hook to his parents and his father Taninga-ni-Kauongo said to him,

“Very well, you are now ready. I’m going to build you a canoe that would let you avenge all the past defeats of Tarawa and remember to bring my sister, Nei Kimoauea back with you”.

Their canoe was christened the Waa ni Kaborerei “The Competing Canoe” which meant that they were now going to fish in Samoan waters, ready to compete and fight to the death. Their supplies were loaded on board including iconic identifications of Tarawa such as a hat called the taraawa (named after Tarawa) and their mother, Nei Taaina said to them,

“At the first stone anchor (moan ro) you will find red snapper (te ingo), her brother the first fish that tried to talk her into returning home when she swam out to sea), “at the second anchor is te awai (another kind of snapper) and at the third anchor you will find te aong”.

Their father Taninga-ni-Kauongo also added his advice to them on how to find his sister Nei Kimoauea,

“You have to scrape the coconut and burn it (to make it fragrant) to draw out the rats,” and other warnings about how to tackle their adversaries in Samoa, how to enter the maneaba; how to sail into the lagoon and so on. Matua Te Rang stayed behind while Taninga-n-Ongora accompanied the Matua brothers because he would be relaying news back to Taninga-ni-Kauongo in Tarawa (like a wireless operator!).
They arrived in Samoan waters and were seen from land that there were three of them, Matua Kikina, Matua Taratara and Matua Keniken. Nobody was concerned about their fourth companion, Taninga-n-Ongora because he was considered a Samoan.

A canoe with three young men on board was despatched to meet them at the first anchor, to fish to the death. Both canoes were placed close together and the Samoans said to their invaders,

“Put your lines out”, these canoes were placed with just enough space between them (at katea - side of canoe opposite to side facing outrigger) to fish and be close enough to reach over and club the heads of the loosing rivals (with the Ibibi n Tamoa or Ibibi n Tarawa). Matua Kikina replied:

“You have the honour of putting your lines down first since you are the occupiers of this land (sea)”,

“All right then,” said the first Samoan sitting at the bow facing Matua Kikina, as he dropped his line. When he caught a fish he said to Matua Kikina,

“Tell me what sort of fish this is, can you identify it?” and Matua Kikina replied,

“Pull it in for it’s the ingo” and his rival said to him,

“How do you know it’s the ingo, are you ready for the Ibibi n Tamoa (Club of Samoa) to touch your heads?”, and Matua Kikina reaffirmed,

“Pull it in for it’s the ingo”, and sure enough it was the red snapper.

The three brothers sat on their canoe in corresponding positions to their opponents on their canoe.
Chapter 16

The Battle Begins

After Matua Kikina successfully identified the ingo, the Samoans said to him,

“‘It’s your turn now to drop your line so I can identify your catch’ and Matua Kikina commanded the magic hook, Nan Tuanga to go fetch a bunch of coconuts from the land of Tabakea or Bakoa. As the hook took off, Matua Kikina began to chant:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ng, ko naira tewean abean te tia kikina} \\
\text{Ni bakan tamaroa inanon te namo} \\
\text{Be a airio, e airake, e ai biko biko} \\
\text{Iaon tari ba raran te ika baoti rake ian Tamoa} \\
\text{I aki bua ao I aki tabe ao I aki mamate} \\
\text{Ba a bonobonotai bonotau bonotan Ten Tabakea} \\
\text{Ngaia bonotau bonotan Ten Nareau –a-a} \\
\text{I aki bua ao I aki tabea ao I aki mani maninga o-o.}
\end{align*}
\]

Roughly translated as follows:

You pretend to be nice, in the lagoon of Samoa,  
As you try to work out our bait and identify our catch.  
I am not lost, I am not worried, and I will not die  
For I am protected by the same magical powers  
that protect Ten Tabakea and Ten Nareau.  
I am not lost, I am not worried and I will not forget.

When his song finished Matua Kikina felt his line stretched and as he pulled it there was a bunch of coconuts still attached to the stem on the hook and he said to his Samoan rival,

“Take a look, can you tell me what sort of a fish this is?” and the Samoan said to him,

“Pull it in for it’s the ingo”, and Matua Kikina replied,

“What do you mean it’s the ingo, do you want the Ibibi n Tarawa to land on your heads”, and his rival said again,

“Pull it in, it’s the ingo” and when it was pulled up between the canoes it wasn’t a fish at all but a bunch of coconuts which was still attached to the stem (te amwi n ni ae airi ma taumena). And this was the first time ever that the Samoans were defeated and their heads were clubbed with the Ibibi n Tarawa (Club of
Tarawa). (Having the green coconuts would provide the Matua brothers with something to drink on their return journey back to Tarawa.) Their bodies were then cast adrift on their canoe.

The Samoan people up in the mountains saw their canoe (men) defeated and could not believe their eyes. They told the Old Men that the Canoe of Samoa was dead, at the hands of their Tarawa rivals.

After winning at the first anchor, Matua Kikina and his brothers moved to the second anchor where the awai was plentiful, to await the arrival of their next rivals. Soon another waa with three strapping Samoan men arrived and stopped at katea. Meanwhile, Taninga-n-ongora relayed to Taninga-ni-kauongo in Tarawa that the first canoe was defeated and they were now stationed on the second anchor, the home of the awai (just as their mother had predicted). One of the Samoan men said to Matua Kikina,

“Drop your line first” and Matua Kikina said,

“I don’t want to bring bad luck on myself, you go first because this is your home”, and the Samoan said,

“Very well”, and lowered his line, caught a fish and said to Matua Kikina who sat facing him,

“Tell me, can you identify what sort of a fish this is?” and Matua Kikina said

“Haul it in for it’s the awai” and the Samoan laughed and said,

“What do you mean it’s the awai, would you like the Ibibi n Samoa to land on your heads?” but Matua Kikina insisted,

“Pull it in it’s the awai” and when his rival pulled it up it really was the awai. Then the Samoan said to Matua Kikina,

“Ok its your turn now to put your line in” and when Matua Kikina dropped his line, he didn’t chant this time but told the magic hook, Nan Tuanga to go and search for a basket full of freshly cooked babai (similar to taro root but much larger, denser and just as delicious) anywhere in Bakoa’s home or Tabakea’s village on land. Nan Tuanga found a basket of babai as commanded and when Matua Kikina pulled his line in he said to his Samoan rival,

“Can you identify what sort of a fish this is?” and the Samoan said,

“Draw it in it’s the awai,” and Matua Kikina said.

“What do you mean it’s the awai, do you wish the Ibibi n Tarawa to land on your heads?” and the Samoan still insisted,

“Pull it in it’s the awai”; and when it was drawn up between their canoes, it was not the awai at all but a basket full of babai (which meant that they had sustenance for their journey back to Tarawa, together with the coconut drinks that they hauled previously). As soon as the Samoans saw it was not the awai at all, they knew their fate was sealed and presented their heads right away. They too were killed and sent adrift on their canoes like the first lot. The Samoan people on land were very angry when they saw the second canoe defeated as well and said,

“These Tarawa men are real warriors”. 
Chapter 17

The Third Anchor – the Aong

The old men on land said that another canoe must be launched. Meanwhile the Matua brothers moved their canoe to the third and last anchor, where the aong fish was plentiful. The third canoe arrived with three more expert fishermen on board and came close to katea again. One of them said,

“We can see that you have been trained well and possess the necessary skills because never before has there been any survivors from Tarawa, usually we defeat and kill them but you are the first lot to survive. Nevertheless put your line in”, but Matua Kikina said to him,

“Your go first, this land is your land” and the Samoan said,

“Very well” and put his line in. As he pulled up a fish, he said to Matua Kikina,

“Identify this fish”, and Matua Kikina said

“Haul it in, it’s the aong,” and his rival said,

“How can it be the aong, do you wish the Ibibi n Samoa to land on your heads!” but Matua Kikina insisted and told him to pull it in anyway. It certainly was the aong. The Samoan said to him,

“It’s time for you now, it’s your turn Tarawa to drop your line in” (It was said during this competition that Matua Kikina was blessed with being able to identify fishes and he ‘owned’ the sea.)

When Matua Kikina dropped the line he commanded the magic hook, Nan Tuanga to hook the root foundations (column) of Tonga (the base of Tonga that bound it to the earth) and pull it closer to Samoa, for in the old days, Tonga was much further away and its mountains could not be seen from Samoa. Nan Tuanga immediately wound the foundations of Tonga several times from underneath it while Matua Kikina was chanting from above,

\[\text{Ng ng kabung te ro ma kavenei oin bouriki bounaba}\]
\[\text{Ana buti, ana roko, ana kaurama ikan nanon te marawa}\]
\[\text{Te bubu takataka, te arinai, te ika batuai}\]
\[\text{E tetei iao n tari te Bakoaura kona ira tevean abean}\]
\[\text{Te toa Nareau i tabwenan ngaina}\]
\[\text{Raua ngaia kam titireu e, ngaia kam titireu o}\]
\[\text{Be a kan ria moan ien kanami mai nano}\]
\[\text{Te ni, te maneaba, te bata ma te mao ma te tikutaumauma}\]
\[\text{Ai te kuna n ruruoia be ira irakeaki nako karawa me nebo ooong.}\]

Cast the line and tie the foundations
They will move, they will come, they will meet fishes in the ocean
The trigger fish, the wrasse, the puffer fish
And standing by is Bakoaura who will cast the bait
Of the giant Nareau at the break of dawn
He will drag it along the sea bed, he will pull
For soon your sustenance will appear from below
The coconut tree, the maneaba, the hut
They will stop and celebrate
They will sing and dance as they are pulled up towards the sky.

As soon as his song finished, Matua Kikina’s line snagged and when he pulled on the foundations of Tonga (such a huge island) his line broke, for Tonga with its reefs and coral heads was very heavy and cumbersome and he realized that he needed assistance to shift Tonga so he cast another spell,

\begin{verbatim}
Ai te oti n taai nna ti anganna kaona ba teaina
(e biri teaina n nim) e aki tau iai,
Nna ti anganna kaona ba uai
(e amanga roko teaina, ai uai ngkanne n roko)
E aki tau iai,
Nna ti anganna kaona ba tenai, e aki tau iai,
Nna ti anganna kaona ba aai, e aki tau iai,
(bwa are ngkana e katikia ao ena moti naba)
Nna ti anganna kaona ba nimaai, e aki tau iai
Nna ti anganna kaona ba oneai, e aki tau iai
Nna ti anganna kaona ba itiai, e aki tau iai
Nna ti anganna kaona ba wanai, e aki tau iai
Nna ti anganna kaona ba ruai, e aki tau iai
Nna ti anganna kaona ba tangaun tau
Tangaun tanrio, tanrake
Tai atubitaki mane ma tamaroa be e kan teke
Te ika ma kinaa ma taraia ma noria!
\end{verbatim}

At sunrise I shall give it one line
(so one line attached itself to the hook) but it was not strong enough
I shall give it a second one
(Another one came, so there are now two more)
It is not strong enough
I shall give it a third line, its not strong enough
I shall give it a fourth, its not strong enough
(For when you pull they will break)
So I shall give it a fifth line, its not strong enough
I shall give it six, its not strong enough
I shall give it seven, its not strong enough
I shall give it eight, its not strong enough
I shall give it nine, its not strong enough
I shall give it ten
Ten to the west, east
Do not change direction for a fish is nearly caught
Identify it, see it, look at it!

(Tonga was now finally moving along after ten lines were attached to the hook while Matua Kikina was provoking his rivals with the words of his song).

The people on top of the mountains saw a land moving closer, the island of Tonga. He asked his rival to identify the fish and the Samoan said,

“Haul it in for it’s a aong”, and Matua Kikina said to him,

“Prove it” and the Samoan saw that it was moving along the surface of the water after the words of the song:

\[
\begin{align*}
Nna ti anganna kaona ba tangaun, tau \\
tangaun n tanrio, tanrake \\
Tai atubitaki mane ma tamaroa be e kan teke \\
Te ika ma kinaa ma taraia ma noria! \\
Te ika tera ae e teke?
\end{align*}
\]

I’ll give it ten more lines, ten to the west, ten to the east
Don’t look back, for it’s nearly caught
It’s a fish, identify it, see it, look at it
What is this fish I have caught?

He sang to the Samoans and they realised it was not a fish but an island moving in through the seas and so Matua Kikina said to them,
“Give me your heads” and they were killed and once again their bodies were cast off on their canoe with blood dripping from their heads.
Chapter 18

Welcome to Samoa!

The old men of Samoa said, “Send a canoe with three men on board to bring them ashore”.

But the visitors were well prepared by their father, Taninga-ni-kauongo, as to what fate or tricks might befall them in Samoa. They followed the canoe up to shore and Matua Kikina told his brothers that when the time comes he would show them which channel to take, and not follow the Samoan canoe, and also when to change the waa around so that the outrigger is facing the westside. While they were paddling ashore Taninga-n-ongora communicated with Taninga-ni-kauongo telling him that all three canoes were now defeated and that they were on their way to land and Taninga-ni-kauongo began chanting from Tarawa,

“Antai wana arei oo?
Kai wan te tia kikina ni kabobo baka n tamaro
laon te ane ma tenga mate te bong
Kai e kabung marawa, kai akea te aira ma te nao
Kai e kabung karawa, kai akea te ang ma te karau
Tai nanobu o bwe a itiwewe on Tamo
Akea te bai be a iti aona oo!”.

Whose canoe is that?
The canoe belongs to someone who can identify and who also pretends to be nice
The sea is calm, there are no currents and waves
The sky is fair, there is no wind and no rain
Don’t be envious for Samoa is now clean
Where there is absolutely nothing left!

And Matua Kikina replied,

“E tangi maia te karongo aei?
E tang mai aon Tarawa
Mai iroun tamau, Taninga-ni-kauongo
E tuangai ba N na bu ro N na tae ro
N na kororo rake inanon te rawa i Tamo
Akea te bai be a iti aona o”.

Where did this buzzing sound (in my ears) come from?
It cries from Tarawa
From my father, Taninga-ni-kauongo
He tells me to pull and hoist up the anchor
To sail through the channel of Samoa
Where there is absolutely nothing left!

The Samoans preceding them said, “You must follow us until we reach land”.

But Matua Kikina ignored them and said to his brothers, “Take this narrow channel up and when you hear me sing you must change the waa around”, and then he began to sing:

*Nnn ko na ira bitan te bwe ma katikana i rama*
*Nna bita te waa (and they changed the canoe around at this point)*
*Nna bita te waa ba n na rama mainiku aban Tai ma Namakaina*
*Be aki tang te wa, me aki tang te rama*
*Me aki tang te bwe, me aki tang te aiai (framework/ribs)*
*Me aki tang te rai, ma te kabi (keel), ma te mango*
*Be na butimaia te Tibu Ten Tabakea mai aon Tamoa*
*Be e na taua tabona ba e na kaeka iaon nangobungina*
*Nangobungini waeu ma waa.*

....You must follow the direction and pull of the outrigger
*I’ll change the canoe’s direction* (and they changed the canoe around at this point)
To place the outrigger westside, where the Sun and the Moon shine
For the canoe does not cry, the outrigger does not complain
The rudder does not fear, the ribs do not complain
The timber does not cry, and the keel, and the poles
For our Grandfather Tabakea will meet us in Samoa
To assist us to disembark the canoe
When we roll it on supports for the keel.

As they were approaching the beach an old woman ran down to do toilet and she carried with her an inai (a woven coconut mat for cover) and she shouted at them,

“Go back” whereupon Matua Kikina chanted to her:

*Kewati, mai mau te rara buabua*
*Te mate te aomata, e tabwena karawa e*
I a tia n tiringa te waan, uo waa, teni waa
E uketati, e uke Tamoa o

Move, clear the way before blood runs
Someone is dead, when the sky splits
I have killed one canoe, two canoes, three canoes
Nothing is left, Samoa is stripped bare.

Then their canoe reached the beach and the old lady pleaded with them to go back to follow the Samoan canoe which was trying to lead them astray or confuse them (kamaningaia) but Matua Kikina jumped off, bashed her on the head, killed her then told his brothers to push the waa over her dead body like a roller (or support) for the waa. The three men from the canoe ran up to meet them but they too were bashed to death with the Ibibi n Tarawa. The people of Samoa were very angry at this blatant killing of the old woman and the three latest men and invited them ashore to the maneaba.

Matua Kikina found them an appropriate place to enter the maneaba from (because there were certain risks and tricks they had to be careful about here too) and they entered from the north-east side. No sooner had they settled themselves down when a young woman, dressed in dancing finery came forward bringing two green coconuts with her. She offered the first one to Matua Kikina: it contained water and she asked him to drink it but he washed his head with it and passed it on to his brothers to do the same. He accepted the second one and instead of washing his head with it (as he was supposed to for a trick to work) he drank the contents and passed it on to his brothers to quench their thirst and then immediately proceeded to crack the woman’s head and her body was dragged outside the maneaba. Meanwhile three old men were watching their every move, ready to attack them at any sign of wrongdoing. But they could see that the visitors knew exactly what they were doing and would not be tricked. They said to them,

“Look, we are now convinced that you are very well prepared and know everything that you are supposed to do (to survive) so let us sit down and talk (maroro) for the next few days”, and Matua Kikina replied,

“No problem”

Matua Taratara (whose name means The One with the Open Eyes or One that Never Sleeps) took over to keep the old men company while his two brothers went to sleep. The story telling went on for three days and three nights until the three old men could not keep their eyes open any longer and fell asleep. As soon as they went to sleep Matua Kikina and Matua Keniken cracked their heads and their bodies were dragged outside the next morning.

Three more men came to tell stories with Matua Taratara and this went on for the next three days and three nights until the same fate befell them. A third lot came for another session and they too ended up falling asleep and their heads were cracked open and their bodies dragged from the maneaba at sun rise.
Chapter 19

In Search of Nei Kimoauea

Now came the Old Chiefs of Samoa (batua) and they said to the young men, “We can see that you are very well prepared and nothing can touch you but we have one last test for you to undertake. We would like you to find our queen whose name is Nei Kimoauea”

(The one I mentioned before - the daughter of Tabakea and Nunikai on Samoa who used to appear in the forest amid lightning to the young men of Samoa who would faint at the sight of her beauty).

What these Wise Old Men did not realize was that Nei Kimoauea was their aunt (sister of their father Taninga-ni-kauongo) but she was born in Samoa. They had been taught everything possible by their father to prepare themselves for their trip to Samoa to find Nei Kimoauea. The Chiefs said,

“We will give you three days to find her but if you come back without her, your bodies will be cut into little pieces, from head to toe. You must leave this morning”.

The brothers left on their odyssey. They prepared the coconuts the way their father Taninga-ni-kauongo had taught them; they scraped the flesh and burnt it so the appetizing scent could waft away and then they hid themselves close by, under some coconut leaves, without making any movements or sound. Soon all sorts of mice started to appear, in various sizes and colours; brown, black, black and white and so on, to eat the coconut. Within about five minutes off they scrambled when the biggest mouse of them all, Nang Korotei, appeared. This giant mouse knew the hiding place of Nei Kimoauea. Matua Kikina whispered to his brothers and said,

“The mice are running away because Nang Koretei is on his way”.

They watched him crawl westward, stopped and looked around, crawled again; (he was almost as big as or bigger than a rabbit) he came closer, his fur was white, stopped, looked sideways, he crawled forward until he reached the coconut, sniffed at it and as he came close by, Matua Kikina jumped at him but unfortunately he didn’t get him for the noise from the dry leaves distracted Nang Koretei and he slipped by on Matua Kikina’s arm and took off to hide in his cave. Matua Kikina turned to his brother, Matua Keniken (the Excavator) and said,

“Why Matua Keniken, what are you waiting for, why don’t you dig after him” so Matua Keniken dug away at everything in his path, big rocks, giant trees, hills, whatever was in the way, sides of mountains, until eventually he grabbed Nang Koretei by the neck, pulled him out and said to him threateningly,

“If you don’t tell us where to find Nei Kimoauea we will kill you.”

And Nang Koretei replied, “I will show you but let me warn you that Nei Kimoauea knows that you are her nephews, the sons of her brother. You must go to a pond in the middle of the island and there, by the edge you will find a flat rock (atimata). At around 2.30 or 3.00 o’clock in the morning, Nei Kimoauea will arrive amidst lightning; she will stand on that rock and will untie her herbal-scented, black grass skirt and dive into that pond for a bath. When she returns, you must not grab her for she is naked, wait until she is dressed again in her grass skirt before you grab her”, Nang Koretei told them.

After being instructed on where to find their aunt and how to trap her they left on their journey.
Chapter 20

Finding Nei Kimoua

They found the flat rock by the pond just on dusk. Matua Kikina hid amongst some reeds beside it, his brother Matua Taratara next to him and on the far side hid Matua Keniken, forming themselves into a circle around the rock. They sat there very still and quiet from sunset through to midnight waiting. Night creatures like crickets came out making all sorts of weird and wonderful noises, dew started to envelope the earth and Matua Kikina said to his brothers,

“She will be here soon Nei Kimoauea,” and suddenly there was a bolt of lightning, the rock was lit up and then Nei Kimoauea was standing there in front of them.

The three brothers were mesmerised by the beauty of their aunt. Nei Kimoauea stood on the rock and looked around as if sensing something was not quite right, she stood awhile pondering till finally she untied her grass skirt, and now stood completely naked while her nephews looked on quietly and very still. Then she dived into the pond to bathe. After a while she returned, stood on the rock again, and as she bent down to pick up her skirt to tie it around her waist, Matua Kikina grabbed her and begged,

“Take pity on us Kimoauea; please come back with us to the maneaba. This is the third day and everyone is waiting for our return.”

She looked at their faces and realized that these nephews of hers had seen her completely naked and she was so ashamed that she turned herself into a baby mouse in Matua Kikina’s palm. She was making little mouse noises (katemeteme). They pleaded and implored her to change herself but she just replied with mouse noises. They then went searching for Nang Korotei who now no longer had a hole to hide in; they found him leaning against the trunk of a tree and they called out to him. He asked them where Nei Kimoauea was and when Matua Kikina opened his palm to show him, he said:

“I don’t know what to do about this, it means that you didn’t listen to the advice I gave you so you can sort it out yourselves!”

That was the last day and everyone was waiting for them back at the maneaba.

The brothers made their way westwards and the people were waiting excitedly for them. They could see that Nei Kimoauea was not with them and they started laughing menacingly,

“The time has come to chop them up into fragments from head to toe” and a Batua asked Matua Kikina where Nei Kimoauea was and he replied,

“Here she is, a baby mouse!” The old men were embarrassed, laughed and said,

“Ah! You are making a mockery of us, just wait for your punishment” and called out,

Buun antin mainiku!
Calling all the spirits from the west!
and all the young Samoan warriors from the west side moved in with their clubs.
Buun antin meang!
Calling all the spirits from the north!
and all the young warriors from north moved in bearing weapons.

Buun antin maeao!
Calling all the spirits from the east!
and all the young men moved in closer to the maneaba.

Buun antin maiaki!
Calling all the spirits from the south!
and all the young warriors moved in forming a dark thick human wall surrounding the maneaba while the three brothers stood in the midst of them all.

They were warned that this human wall would march in slowly towards them and once they were within reach they would be reduced to pulp.

Ke rakeia!
Go closer!
... and the human wall was closing in gradually, from the four sides.

Matua Kikina was still begging Nei Kimoauea to reinvent herself but she still would not listen.

Ke rakeia riki!
Move in even closer!!
... and the army was getting closer.

Now Matua Kikina realized that Nei Kimoauea would not take pity on them so he started lamenting,

I veteo o oo, I veteiko ngai
E mena ia tibu Ten Tabakea?
Ma nna veveteia i abana i buakonikai o
Ba e mena ia Tinau Nei Kimoa reirei
Be na kauka te rabuna te ba ma te kiberanimata o
Ba I kawa ngai,
Nei Kimoauea, Ko na tei iterau
Ko na katioa ririm te keang ma te karoro
Ba e teteve aon Tamoa ma uotaia te koto ma te batiraku
Ba ko na irai nako aon Tarawa
Ko na kaborerei ma Kirata n Tarawa ne!
I’m calling, I’m calling you
Where is my grandrather Ten Tabakea?
I’m calling to him in his home in the forest
Where is my Mother Nei Kimoa the beautiful
To open the the wall of rock
Take pity on me, Nei Kimoauea
Come stand by my side
Swing your grass skirt of ferns and blackened reeds
The people of Samoa are closing in with their arms and clubs
Come with me to Tarawa
Where you will compete with Kirata of Tarawa!

Nei Kimoauea ignored their pleas, she kept making sucking noises as Matua Kikina held her in his palms and someone yelled out “Move in closer”. Matua Kikina lamented the second time:

I veteo o oo, I veteiko ngai
E mena ia tibu Ten Tabakea?
Ma nna veveteia i abana i buakonikai o
Ba e mena ia Tinau Nei Kimoa reirei
Be na kauka te rabuna te ba ma te kiberanimata o
Ba I kawa ngai,
Nei Kimoauea, Ko na tei iterau
Ko na katioa ririm te keang ma te karoro
Ba e teteve aon Tamoa ma uotaia te koto ma te batiraku
Ba ko na irai nako aon Tarawa
Ko na kaborerei ma Kirata n Tarawa ne.

I’m calling, I’m calling you
Where is my grandrather Ten Tabakea?
I’m calling to him in his home in the forest
Where is my Mother Nei Kimoa the beautiful
To open the the wall of rock
Take pity on me, Nei Kimoauea
Come stand by my side
Swing your grass skirt of ferns and blackened reeds
The people of Samoa are closing in with their arms and clubs
Come with me to Tarawa
Where you will compete with Kirata of Tarawa.

Nei Kimoauea was not listening, she just kept on making the sucking noises and meanwhile the four sides of the human wall were closing in with the clubs at the ready.

“Go even closer” yelled out the young men and Matua Kikina now realized this was their last chance so he opened his palms out and implored Nei Kimoauea yet again,

I veteo o oo, I veteiko ngai
E mena ia tibu Ten Tabakea?
Ma nna veveteia i abana i buakonikai o
Ba e mena ia Tinau Nei Kimoa reirei
Be na kauka te rabuna te ba ma te kiberanimata o
Ba I kawa ngai, Nei Kimoauea
Ko na tei iterau
Ko na katioa ririm te keang ma te karoro
Ba e teteve aon Tamoa ma uotaia te koto ma te batiraku
Ba ko na irai nako aon Tarawa
Ko na kaborerei ma Kirata n Tarawa ne.
Chapter 21

Nei Kimoauea Meets her Destiny

As soon as he finished this last cry for help and the clubs were about to hit their heads, the warriors’ eyes were blinded momentarily by lightning as Nei Kimoauea flew off. They saw her standing by her nephews, and were so overcome by her physical beauty that they all collapsed in shock. Now the brothers went into a frenzy cracking their heads like opening coconuts with machetes. Just as they were ready to escape they overheard a conch shell message from Tabakea in the forest,

\[ E \text{ a tau te tiriti o! } \]

That is enough killing!

the voice of Tabakea boomed from the forest asking for the massacre to end. The brothers were now preparing to take Nei Kimoauea back to Tarawa from Samoa and before they set sail Nei Kimoauea said to them,

“Before we go please place the tiller (bwe) on the beach for I’d like to invite some friends to come along with me”.

And she invited all the different kinds and colours of mice that were mentioned previously. They crawled up by the tiller filling the canoe everywhere, on the float, up the mast and so on. Then they sailed for Tarawa.

They landed at Tebonobono (as mentioned earlier) and Nei Kimoauea went ashore at Buariki and there she settled with all her friends at a place called the Mount of Nei Kimoauea (Tabukin Nei Kimoauea). Listeners will remember that in Matua Kikina’s laments he mentioned that Nei Kimoauea “will compete with Kirata of Tarawa” and this is where Kirata was living. (Later on I will explain the family tree of Kirata.)

Kirata had a habit of taking a swim on the ocean side of Buariki not far from where Nei Kimoauea was living. He used to see her and marvel at her beauty and was falling madly in love with her. Nei Kimoauea did not take any notice of him so one day while he was swimming he chanted a cleansing spell (tae ibenao) that would make him irresistible to her,

\[ O \text{ tebotebou me a nako buakakau } \]
\[ Me \text{ a nako ibenaou, me anako te rin auau } \]
\[ Me \text{ a nako te bebeto } \]
\[ Me \text{ a nako, me a nako, me a nako! } \]

I’m cleansing all the bad karma away
Go away unattractiveness, go away bad luck
Go away
Its gone, its gone, its gone!
He repeated this three times and then jumped into the sea, and while holding his breath under water, he turned to his left side and scrubbed his skin (he did this during springtide (iababa) it is the best time to cleanse yourself of any bad luck or bad spirits) and then he turned towards land as he recited another spell,

\[ \text{I a eka kunu ngaia aio} \]
\[ \text{Ti bon ngai Kirata} \]
\[ \text{Ae te kun raoi, ae te kun n tatanaki} \]
\[ \text{Ae te kun tabemoi, tabemoi} \]
\[ \text{I karekereke i tari, I karekereke i anna} \]
\[ \text{Bungiran areau toa mam!} \]

I am getting a new skin
I am Kirata
Of the beautiful skin, attractive skin
Of the skin so soft and nice
It once was rough, when on sea or land
But I will cleanse it with fresh sweet water!

He repeated this three times and then he went ashore where he rinsed himself with fresh water and cast yet another spell:

\[ \text{Tae mangamangai e, tae mangamangai o} \]
\[ \text{I tebotebo ieta akana ainen eta} \]
\[ \text{Te mauri tera te mauri te raoi} \]
\[ \text{Tae mangamangai e, tae mangamangai o} \]
\[ \text{I tebotebo I taari akana ainen taari} \]
\[ \text{Te mauri tera te mauri te raoi} \]
\[ \text{Tae mangamangai e, tae mangamangai o} \]
\[ \text{I tebotebo ieta akana ainen eta} \]
\[ \text{Te mauri tera te mauri te raoi} \]

the writer’s rough translation:

I’m cleansing myself to bring me luck
Should a particular woman go to sea
She will be affected there
If she stays on the land
She will be affected there too
And luck will come my way!
Once he finished he took as his towel a young white coconut leaf (te ba kabane, te mareve) and recited the following words where he finally invoked Nei Kimoauea’s name,

\[
\begin{align*}
Taria\ e,\ taria\ o,\ tara\ ni\ matani\ kunu\\
N\ akea\ n\ nakon\ te\ ara\ n\ aine\ temanna\\
Teuana\ anta\ ngai\ ao\ Nei\ Kimoauea\\
Ngongom\ ngai\ ao\ kababam\ ngai\\
Ao\ bon\ ti\ ngai\ naba\ inanon\ wim\ ngkoe\ anne\ Nei\ Kimoauea\\
Ao\ bon\ ti\ ngai\ naba\ o.
\end{align*}
\]

As I dry myself, my skin has transformed
Especially for one special woman
You will know me Nei Kimoauea
You will utter nobody else’s name Nei Kimoauea
But mine only.

He repeated this three times while he was drying himself and then he discarded the leaf. Nei Kimoauea became affected by this spell (and later went to where Kirata left the towel), took it and wiped herself with it whereupon she became pregnant, for Kirata had left his sperm on the leaf!

(Even to this day in Kiribati culture, a girl never shares a towel that has been used by a man for it is believed that she can fall pregnant that way! – a Kiribati superstition)

Nei Kimoauea eventually had four sons by Kirata as follows: Beia-te-Kamaraia, Beia-te-Rabaraba, Beia-ma-Tekaai and Beia-te-Rang. These boys were now half spirit/half man unlike their parents who were both spirits.

(Tabakea, Nei Kimoauea’s father was also a spirit who lived in the forest but his physical form can be seen in creatures like a lizard (tikunei), a cockroach (babatua), a centipede (roata) and other land creatures. (I’m explaining this so that all of you listeners and the custodian of this story Nei Rosa will know that Bakoa too was a spirit, and has no physical form but when you are sailing in rainy, stormy weather and rough seas at night and you see a bright light like a gas lamp (te boka-ma-rawa) don’t ever follow that light – it’s like a mirage - for it is Bakoa trying to trick you into going deeper into the ocean. Once you realize you are lost you will hear a conch shell trumpet from under your canoe and soon the real sharks will come.)

So the sailor must always make sure he takes the right precautions when setting out. When you reach your destination this is what you must do to appease the spirit of Bakoa: take whatever food you have left from your trip and mix it with food from your new destination (or a smoke – wrap your tobacco with coconut leaf collected from your new destination) for Bakoa watches you and if you don’t do this he will get you! The spirits of land and ocean are not appeased until you give them an offering. This is the tradition from long ago for our islands, it is not something new.)
Chapter 22

Beia-te-Kamaraia and his brothers

Let’s return now to Nei Kimoauea’s sons: Beia-te-kamaraia, Beia-te-Rabaraba, Beia-ma-Tekaai and Beia-te-Rang. These boys became high chiefs of Tebonobono (now known as Buariki) and they had a cook called Naubwebwe. He lived on the ocean side of the island. The brothers were very cruel to him but he could not retaliate for he knew that if he said anything back to them or swore at them he would immediately die on the spot. Nobody knew how he came to be there. He used to cook for them a special dish of the red mullet.

Sometimes when he returned home he was covered in blood from things being thrown at him but he was so patient and humble. He put up with this treatment until one day, a canoe stopped by with three giants and their sister on board. Their names were Uamumuri, Nanikai and Tabutoa and their sister was called Nei Nimanoa.

They stopped by at Buariki because the youngest, Tabutoa was thirsty so Nei Nimanoa was sent ashore to fetch some water. They had travelled from Land of the Giants known as Makaiao (giants populated this land and they criss-crossed the vast ocean). Nei Nimanoa arrived at Naubwebwe’s house and he asked her, “Neiko, what are you doing here?”

She replied “Nao, I am looking for some water, do you have water for my brother, Tabutoa to drink”

He said, “Neiko, there is absolutely no water here but how would you feel if I ask you to marry me?”

Nei Nimanoa replied, “I can’t make a decision for myself so you had better go and ask my brothers waiting on their canoe”, so off he went to ask the brothers for their sister’s hand in marriage.

They agreed and left her with Naubwebwe and carried on their way northwards until they reached Kiebu, an islet off Makin. Tabutoa went ashore there looking for water as he was still thirsty, and found a pond where he immediately lowered his huge body down across it supported by his arms and proceeded to suck water and mud from the pond. (To this day, there is no water on Kiebu because Tabutoa sucked the islet dry!)

The canoe then left to cruise the vast Pacific Ocean.

Back to Nei Nimanoa – Nei Nimanoa was now Naubwebwe’s wife and they had three sons whom Nei Nimanoa named after her brothers: Uamumuri, Nanikai and Tabutoa. Young Tabutoa was a rough sort, just like his namesake. One day Naubwebwe asked them to get him some coconut leaves for weaving a basket before he left for his cooking duties for the chiefs. Instead of tearing the leaves off the coconut tree, Tabutoa pulled the whole tree down and dragged it towards his father. When Naubwebwe saw how strong his son was, he decided they must leave Buariki in case Tabutoa insulted the chiefs and they would all be dead. His sons would often ask him how he got injuries when he returned from his duties but he would never tell them in case they took revenge. He told his wife they had to leave Buariki and he built a canoe and set sail for Maiana. They spent a night there, and then sailed for Abemama. They spent only one night at Abemama and then went southwards to Kuria, then Aranuka and after that they headed for Nonouti.
Chapter 23

Tabutoa kills Tabaka

At Nonouti they landed at a place called Taungaeaka which was inhabited by Tabaka who invited them ashore for rest and refreshments. Tabaka had a beautiful wife called Nei Teveia from Beru Island. When Tabutoa saw Nei Teveia he fell in love with her on the spot and immediately twisted Tabaka’s head round to the back and killed him! Naubwebwe was disgusted and said to him, “Nao, what is wrong with you, this man was kind to us; he welcomed and fed us because we are visitors and now you have done this, how dare you” and Tabutoa could not care less, “It’s all right, now I can marry his wife!”

They stayed here for some time.

Meanwhile back at Buari the three high chiefs became worried when Naubwebwe had not shown up for work for a few days so Beia-te-kamaraia set sail on his canoe ‘Te Aka Beia’ in search of Naubwebwe. When he arrived at Maiana he was told that Naubwebwe went to Abemama, so he followed. At Abemama he was told Naubwebwe had gone to Kuria, then Aranuka till he arrived at Nonouti where he found Naubwebwe’s canoe. When Naubwebwe saw him coming ashore, he warned his sons, “This man is coming please don’t insult or swear at him”.

Beia-te-kamaraia said to Naubwebwe, “Naubwebwe you have been gone so long, why didn’t you tell us you were leaving?” and without missing a beat, as he laid eyes on Nei Teveia, he continued, “Nao, how beautiful is this woman standing next to you”.

while Tabutoa cursed him under his breath, “E akani bo te bakarube o!” (Someone is going to be smashed in the head!) and with that he fell down dead (for Beia-te-Kamaraia had been protected by powerful magic and whoever crossed him, by speech, deed or thought, would die or have something nasty happen to him – that was the reason why Naubwebwe had to move his family away). Beia-te-Kamaraia then said to Naubwebe, “Nao, what’s wrong with your son, he said something didn’t he? Never mind now I can have his wife!”

So Nei Teveia had three husbands – Tabaka, Tabutoa and Beia-te-Kamaraia. When she became pregnant she told Beia-te-Kamaraia that she wanted to go back to Beru to have her baby amongst her family. They set sail and on the way stopped at Tabiteuea where Beia-te-Kamaraia saw a young woman called Nei Kirirere. She was the daughter of Te Obaia te Buraerae (Kirirere’s story and origin will be told later on.)

Beia-te-Kamaraia said to Te Obaia te Buraerae (the Feathered) “What do you think, when I return from Beru I would like to make your daughter my wife”, and Te Obaia te Buraerae agreed, “No problem, come back and take her for your wife!”
At Beru when Teveia gave birth, her baby was stuck and had to be pulled out. It turned out to be a skull and Teveia died in childbirth. The skull was named after its mother, Teveia and is now a ghost roaming the island of Beru. *(If you are a visitor to Beru and you are not protected by strong spells - bono aom - and you dream of a skull then you know that Teveia has ‘found’ you.)*
Chapter 24

Nei Kobine and the Skull

On his way back Beia-te-Kamaraia stopped at Tabiteuea and married Nei Kirirere.

Let me now talk about the origins of Nei Kirirere. I’ll stop talking about Beia-te-Kamaraia when he married her at Temanoku which is now called Buota. (It used to be called Temanoku but during sporting competitions between the people of Temanoku and Nonouti, the Nonouti people renamed it Buota after their village and took the name Temanoku back to their village.) But I’ll tell the story of Nei Kirirere when the village was still called Temanoku.

In a place called Takoronga Inano (Takoronga in the Sea) in Tabiteuea there lived Taranga and his wife Nei Kobine and they had a daughter called Nei Kiku. (This place can be recognized by a path in the shallows marked by the constant walking over it by Nei Kiku to fetch fresh water from Takoronga Ieta (on land). It’s like someone has cleared a path by brooming over it. Later after Nei Kiku went to live in Samoa with her husband, Nei Kobine used the same path to fetch fresh water.

One morning while she was getting water she came across a baby crying by the well – the baby was about four months old. It was bawling its eyes out and Nei Kobine felt sorry for it. She thought the baby may have fallen off Na Utonga’s canoe during the great escape told at the beginning of the story; she thought maybe someone had left him behind. She took the baby with her back to Takoronga Inano and showed Taranga. Taranga asked,

“Where did you find that baby, where did he come from?” And Kobine replied,

“I found him crying by the well, perhaps he belonged to one of the passengers on Na Utonga’s canoe when they left during the Separation?”

The child was still crying like you’ve never heard a baby cry before. Nei Kobine tried everything to calm him down: carried him around but still he was bawling his eyes out; she passed him over to Taranga until he too was worn out and handed him back to Kobine and by sunset he was still crying. Nei Kobine carried on cuddling and carrying him into midnight until she was feeling sleepy and placed the baby on her chest. This seemed to calm him down and he stopped crying.

Taranga said, “That’s good, hold him that way on your chest, daylight is coming and we need our sleep” and they both fell into a deep slumber. The baby now woke up and had his way with Nei Kobine. When Nei Kobine woke up, she found the baby had gone and felt as though she had been interfered with and said to Tabanga,

“It feels like I’ve been raped by that baby or whoever it may have been, and now he’s gone.”

Tabanga replied, “We have been tricked by Nareau, let’s hide and change ourselves to sea cucumbers because now he will be bothering us all the time”.

And they became sea cucumbers rolling around on the reef. (Takoronga i Nano was in the shallows.) Nareau appeared and woke Taranga up and said,
“Why have you changed into sea cucumbers, get up and go home.” Taranga gave up and changed back to himself. When Nareau left they became manta rays. Nareau reappeared and asked,

“Taranga why have you changed to manta grays?” so they changed back to themselves again and now Nei Kobine found out she was carrying Nareau’s baby. Taranga said to her,

“It is best we leave this place, we need to be as far away as possible from Nareau or he will keep dropping in on us” and so they went to a place called Hawaiki (situated somewhere in the abyss, in Mone (not to be confused with Hawaii – Hawaiki is a significant mythical place in Micronesian and Polynesian folklore). They lived here while Nei Kobine was getting heavy towards the end of her pregnancy. When she was approaching her ninth month, an enormous shark beached itself nearby in the lagoon and people trapped it. It was carved up and baked in an earth oven until all the pieces were cooked except for the head. Someone yelled out,

“Open its mouth and put a coconut husk in it to make sure it’s well cooked,” (To this day shark’s heads are cooked with a burning husk placed inside the mouth.)

When they opened its mouth to put the husk in, Nareau flew out and Nei Kobine delivered her baby!  But it was not your normal baby, it was a skull. Nareau blew air onto it to give it his magical powers and then he returned to his home in the Bo-ma-te-Maki. The skull started to grow eyes and a mouth and Taranga was becoming jealous of it. Inhabitants of a place called Nabanaba were getting an inkling of his feelings and they took this baby to Nabanaba, adopted him and re-named him Batuku-te-Ata.

After Batuku-te-Ata left Hawaiki, Auriaria (another inhabitant of Te Bo-ma-te-Maki) arrived and he brought with him a seed from Te Bo-ma-te-Maki and told Taranga,

“Nao, sow this seed from Te Bo-ma-te-Maki, I think it would grow well at the end of your fishing trap (naa) where the sea foam would fertilise it and the waves from the deep ocean would nurture it.”

The seed was so miniscule; it was like a grain of sand. It grew so well and strong and shot straight up. When Auriaria saw it he said to Taranga, “I shall call this the first tree and name it Terenga after your name Taranga”.

The tree flourished and Auriaria flew to the top and lived there.

The Skull Batuku-te-Ata flew from Nabanaba to live on the top of this tree (Terenga) as well. There were now two inhabitants of it, Auriaria and the Batuku-te-Ata. Terenga, the first tree kept shooting straight up and landforms in the guise of clouds floated past from the west and fragmented land masses came whizzing by it but when a black cloud of rock came by, the tree pierced it in the middle and suddenly the black rock stopped moving. So did all the other floating cloud land formations: they stopped in their tracks to form islands. The black rock cloud became known as Samoa.
Chapter 25

Kaintukuaba Tree of Samoa  (This section of the story is about Samoa.)

Auriaria pierced the middle of this land mass (Samoa) from underneath until Terenga came through on the other side at a place called Matang. This second tree (after it pierced Samoa) was known as Kaintukuaba. The Skull Batuku-te-Ata made his home at the base of this tree and Auriaria kept going upwards on top of Kaintukuaba. The heat of the sun from above was slowing further growth of the tree and it split into four branches - the southern branch held the Goddess of the Ocean, Nei Tituabine, the branch facing east had Nei Takarara; the branch facing northwards hosted Na Kaai and the branch facing west couldn’t shelter anyone because it was subjected to strong westerly winds. Nei Tituabine, who lived on the southern branch collected dirt from her body (into a ball) and put it on the western branch. She cleaned herself a second time and placed that dirt also on the western branch. These balls of dirt became eggs; the first one hatched into a bird called “Te Taake” and the second into another bird which was called “Te Korouangotungotu”. These two birds became inhabitants of the western branch. Auriaria was living at the top of Kaintukuaba and his ‘beru’ was at the base of the tree.

From the roots of this tree in Samoa, came lots of people like Taburitongoun and his son Taburitokia, Teuribaba and so on and the Skull Batuku-te-Ata became their king. One day a pimple appeared on top of his head and when it burst, out came Na Katimango; another pimple burst from his brain and out came another man, Nang Kaburo. Another pimple appeared between his eyebrows and out of it came Rairaueana te I-Matang.

The people were getting hungry and were considering building a canoe so they could go in search of food (humans). They felled the first tree Terenga down and built their canoe out of it. When it was completed they christened it “Te Kaburoro” (the brain) after Nang Kaburo who came from Batuku-te-Ata’s brain. This canoe went on expeditions to capture the inhabitants of Manra and Nukumaroro (to the east) as their source of food. They picked young boys of prepubescent age and took them back to Samoa, killed and ate them. The most delicious part was given to Batuku the Skull and the bones, ribs and offal were given to Teuribaba.

This practice went on for a while. One day Teuribaba decided to go on the expedition so he stowed away on “Te Kaburoro” and stayed at Manra and Nukumaroro where he taught the inhabitants how to fight their captors. Afterwards he returned to Samoa, again hidden in the canoe.

The next time the Samoans went to Manra and Nukumaroro they were shocked to find the inhabitants ready to fight them with clubs and physical combat (iranki – a Kiribati martial arts form). Teuribaba was also angry at the two birds that lived above him – Te Taake and Te Korouangotungotu – for they were constantly crapping on him. He wanted to cut the tree down so he asked Taburitongoun if his son Taburitokia could assist him to fell it. Taburitokia had teeth like a chain saw (by today’s comparison). Taburitokia bit the tree trunk until it fell into the ocean facing the setting sun. When it fell the top of it where Auriaria lived became the home of giants called Makaiao or Land of Giants as it later spawned giants like Uamumuri, Nanikai and Tabutoa (mentioned previously). “Beruna” was underneath the tree and the people of Beru said their island was the first land, and they know the story of their own island and I shall leave that to them. Each tree has a ‘beru’ and the Kaintukuaba from Samoa was no different, they are usually found near the base of a tree.

I just wanted to explain about the people that lived near the top of the Kaintukuaba (before it fell into the ocean).
Chapter 26

Te Kaai and Te Taake

Na Kaai that lived on the northern branch flew onto Tarawa and he became the ancestor of Tarawa people. To this day we know that there are many people called Te Kaai in all its derivatives, including Ikaate for they are all named after their ancestor Te (Na) Kaai.

Nei Tekarara who lived on the eastern branch brought a seed from the Kaintikuaba with her when she went to live at Nabanaba with her two husbands, Tauaba and Na Kekea. She had a daughter called Nei Takanuea.

Nei Tituabine who lived on the southern branch lived in the ocean (Goddess of Marawa) and the two birds, Te Taake and Te Korouangotungotu (that hatched from her dirt) and who lived on the western branch flew, side by side, north westwards. Whenever Te Taake was tired of flying, it would rest on top of Te Korouangotungotu. Each time it did this, it forced Te Korouangotungotu to go lower and lower until it perished in the ocean.

Te Taake eventually landed on the island of Makin, originally known as Aba-non-nonnako (disappearing island). Here Te Taake settled by a pond that the people used for bathing. Whenever two or three people came for a bath they never returned for it would peck and ate them, like a lizard being eaten by a stork or crane. This went on for a while until people finally realized what was happening and stopped going there.

By now Nei Tituabine remembered her two birds and went searching for them. She arrived on Makin and asked if they saw her birds. The people said, “Neiko, so that is your bird by the pond? It is the reason our population is going down”, and told her what had been going on. Nei Tituabine went to see for herself and then taught them how to kill it off with a fan. She wove a magic spell over a fan and gave it to them saying,

“When it flies towards you just fan it with this special fan” and then she left for her home in the ocean.

Now everyone on Makin knew what to do so as soon as Te Taake made its way towards them, they would fan it until it retreated from the power of Nei Tituabine’s magic spells. Eventually it died of hunger by the pond and worms from its corpse crawled out as men, the first one being: Koura, the second: Koura-taake followed by Koura-mwemwe and so on.

By day these handsome young men lived on top of a pandanus tree called, Te Anikoura, which was situated by the pond. The inhabitants of Makin were surprised to see these young men join in the nocturnal games and then disappear at daybreak. They decided they would search the land for these new people and found them on top of Te Anikoura and led them to the village. Here they began mixing with the people and produced children.

(It is said that on Makin and Butaritari, when a dying person asks to be fanned, it is thought that he was descended from Te Taake’s worms and as soon as he was fanned, he died. That is the old way until now on Makin and Butaritari.) This is the end of the story of Te Taake as his descendants have become humans.
Chapter 27

Te Uekera, the Third Tree

Now we change over to the story of Nei Tekarara, who lived on the eastern branch of Te Kaintikuaba and who, as told previously, took the seed of Te Kaintikuaba to Nabanaba where she lived with her two husbands Tauaba and Na Kekea and their daughter Nei Takanuea. On Tarawa in those days, there lived a man called Teariki-n-Tarawa and his wife, Nei Tarawa. They produced a daughter called Nei Terieri.

When Terieri became a young woman (she lived in Tebonobono, now Buariki) she found out that Nei Tekarara had taken away seeds of Te Kaintikuaba to Nabanaba so she asked her father if he could go and bring a seed back for her to plant on Tarawa. So off he went to ask Tauaba and Na Kekea and their wife Nei Tekarara for the seed and they agreed but said their daughter, Nei Takanuea must go too for she knew how to cultivate the seed (from Kaintikuaba) on Tarawa. They returned to Buariki on Tarawa. Nei Terieri who believed ‘owned’ this plant watched as her parents and Nei Takanuea (who really owned this plant because the seed belonged to her parents) went about their daily lives. Nei Takanuea planted the seed and as soon as she supplied the first fertilizer (te bon) the tree burst into such luxuriant growth, the branches and leaves were sweeping the ground and was so very much admired by Nei Terieri. One day while she was up in the tree, and without anyone realizing it, Takanuea applied the next lot of fertilizer and the tree shot up higher taking Terieri with it. On the third application of the fertilizer, Nei Terieri was transported on the tree straight up to the heavens - Sky (Karawa).

It is at this point when Nei Terieri reached the Sky that the story joins up with the previous tale about Beiate-Kamaraia who married Nei Kirirere in Tabiteuea, the daughter of Te Obaia te Buraerae. Also at this point let me explain the people who came out of the Sky.

Whilst the Sun in the Sky was busily going about its powerful work, it produced two people, a man called Raure-ni-Ngaina (Break of Dawn – Sun Rise) and a woman called Bo-ni-Mainiku (Coming from the West – Sun Set). This couple produced Tau Karawa (Upholder of the Sky). (The tree that transported Nei Terieri to the Sky, in mythology, was the third tree, Te Uekera of Tarawa, from the seed of Kaintikuaba, the subject of the battles between Tarawa and Samoa by Matua Kikina and his brothers as told before.)

When Tau Karawa saw Nei Terieri he took her as his wife. She fell pregnant and when she delivered her baby it was a strong wind called Tabuariki. It was an invisible force (but felt as a strong wind). She had another baby and this time the baby had human characteristics with arms and legs and his name was Te Obaia (at this time he was not yet known as Te Obaia te Buraerae or Te Obaia the Feathered).

Down below on Buariki, Nei Terieri’s heartbroken parents were wondering how they could get their beloved daughter back. They saw her disappear on the tree as it was fertilized the last time, while they were looking for her to show her how flourishing her tree was.

Teariki-n-Tarawa told all the young men of Tarawa that whoever was able to climb the tree and bring Nei Terieri back would become her husband. Many young men tried but when the people of Nabanaba (the true owners of the seed) saw them, they blew the northerly winds their way to shake them off the tree. Not one of them survived, they all fell to their death.
Chapter 28

Baretarawa rescues Terieri

Now we go to the story of Baretarawa. During the attempts by the young men to climb Te Uekera to rescue Nei Terieri, (and I mentioned previously that Nareau the Second had a child in Takoronga Inano with Nei Kobine and another Nareau had a son with Nei Takanuea (owner of the plant through her parents) called Baretarawa, the grandchild of Tauaba, Na Kekea and Nei Takarara of Nabanaba). As he grew into a fine young man, he told his mother Nei Takanuea that he wished to rescue Nei Terieri. His mother told him to go to his grandparents at Nabanaba and ask them how to get Nei Terieri. He did.

When he returned he asked his mother to cut all the hair off the heads of the dead men underneath the tree and braid them into a belt or rope (nuota) to use for climbing. They also told him how he should climb the tree. When Nei Takanuea finished braiding the belt, Baretarawa climbed Te Uekera. His grandparents saw someone climbing the tree (from Nabanaba) but were not sure if it was their grandson. They blew a mild northerly wind but Baretarawa was prepared for this, he climbed up then he would stop and look northwards, climbed up and then look northwards again and when he saw black clouds coming towards him from the north, he tied himself tightly with the nuota to the southern side of the tree. His grandparents said,

“We are not sure if that is him or not so let’s give him a mild northerly wind.”

But Baretarawa was protected by the tree and was tied to it by the nuota. He had also been warned that the wind would blow for three days so he was well prepared. After three days, he untied the rope and climbed up further.

While he was climbing he looked down and saw an island which he named Maiana (or Mai Ana – From Underneath). Again he continued climbing, and in the moonlight he saw another island which he christened Abemama (Land of the Moonlight). The next morning he climbed up further and saw another island which he named Aranuka (Ara Nuka - Our Middle), the mid point of the islands to the north and to the south. But while continuing to climb he almost got blown away by the westerlies and while scrambling to keep hold he spied another island which he called Kuria (Hold on To) because he almost fell, so he quickly tied himself to the western side of the tree. The winds blew for three days, like he was warned, and he waited this out. After three days he climbed up again and looked southwards. Then he looked northwards and he saw another island that he called Abaian (Land to the North), he climbed up once again and saw another island in the distance, not very clearly, so he named it Marakei (Shrouded Island). (At this time, Butaritari was not yet known because it would eventually emerge from the bottom of the ocean (Butaritari - Land of the Sea Scent – it is the only island in Kiribati that was formed this way – see full explanation in Glossary.)

As Baretarawa continued climbing he kept looking southwards. Another wind blew from the south and he tied himself on the southern side of the tree, and the wind blew for three days. After that he untied himself and climbed up bit more but kept his eyes in a western direction, like he had been warned, for this last wind was going to be the fastest and fiercest and it would last for just one day. This strong westerly was called Karean Tarawa (to blow Tarawa over) which would cause Te Uekera to sway. He kept looking to the west and when he saw that it was approaching, he quickly tied himself to the eastern side. The force of the wind became intense very quickly, probably not unlike a typhoon, shook the tree and only lasted overnight. At sunrise the next morning it was gone. Baretarawa untied his belt and he finally made it to Nei Terieri. He was lucky there was no one else around for Tau Karawa was away with his son Te Obaia, (who would later
be called Te Obaia te Buraerae - Te Obaia the Feathered). Baretarawa told Terieri to hurry and go down the tree with him. Before leaving, she said to Baretarawa,

“"I must kill this tree, I shall pierce the apex so no one can follow us” and she cast spells and magic as she did this.

The branches rotted and died as they left them behind, all the way down to its base, and when they reached the ground Terieri’s name was changed to Nei Tereere (to cut or strip down a tree). They married and produced a son called Kirata (mentioned previously) whose leaf towel impregnated Nei Kimoauea.
Chapter 29

**Te Obaia the Feathered**

Now we go to the heavens or the skies where Te Obaia was living with his father Tau Karawa. When they returned to Te Uekera, Tau Karawa was surprised to see that it had died and Nei Terieri had gone and he said to his son,

“It has happened! You don’t have a mother any more Te Obaia”.

Te Obaia cried (for he was still quite young at this time) and wanted to follow her but there was no way down. Tau Karawa took pity on his son and asked his carpenter, Taabunuea, to build him a flying craft. He said to him,

“Taabunuea, are you able to build wings or a flying craft that would this child to his mother?”

So Taabunuea fashioned wings from a tree called te kiebutinang; he cut holes in the timber and fitted them onto Te Obaia’s arms up to his shoulders and made hinges behind his blades. He did the same for Te Obaia’s legs and body. (Everything was made from the tree, te kiebutinang, by Tau Karawa’s carpenter, Taabunuea.) When all this was done, Taabunuea also created a mask with eye protection and a mouthpiece like the frigate bird’s beak. He then said to Tau Karawa,

“His transport is ready but I would like to have feathers to sew onto it.”

So Tau Karawa asked all the men in the Sky to catch a flight of birds at Aumuriaki and pluck their feathers off. They were sewn on to the timber work but there was not enough. When Tau Karawa saw this he asked the men to kill all the birds of Aumuriaki, Tekokone, Atani-karawa, Karawa-ni-karawa, Karawa-merimeri, Karawa-utato, (these were bird sanctuaries in the Sky). All these feathers covered the craft completely and it looked like a giant frigate bird. Taabunuea also gave it a white crest. He then fitted Te Obaia into it and began testing its flight. Once it was ready and flying properly, with its frigate bird eyes, head and beak and looking exactly like a frigate bird, his father Tau Karawa said to him,

“Look, you go and follow your mother to Tarawa below, and you must not bring anything back when you return because we do not want to contaminate the heavens”.

(The missionaries told us that people in Heaven were clean, white and pure, and that was how Te Obaia looked in his feathery flying suit – handsome, white and shiny.) It was during this time that his name was changed to Te Obaia te Buraerae (Te Obaia the feathered man).

While he was flying freely around, his elder brother Tabuariki the Wind became jealous and blew him off course over places such as Onaero, Baribari, Taubukinanti and Onouna. Te Obaia knew that his brother was jealous of him, for following their mother, to Tarawa. (The first island he flew over, Onaero is now known as Nauru. Lots of places have old names but Nauru was formerly known by the names of Onaero, then Aboaraora followed by Nawaro. We do not know the current names of the other islands Te Obaia flew over like Baribari but Taubukinanti may well be Banaba, (Ocean Island) because it is rocky and hilly. Onouna’s present day name is still unknown; all these islands are in the Pacific Ocean.)
Chapter 30

Te Obaia falls in love with Nei Katura

When Te Obaia reached Onouna, he found Terabanga and his wife Nei Teanti living there (previously I mentioned that this couple settled here after escaping on Na Utonga’s canoe from the three curses of man). They had a very beautiful daughter called Nei Katura. She was also known as Queen of Onouna. As Te Obaia was flying low birdlike over the coconut trees along the shore, the young men and women who were entertaining Nei Katura with games saw the frigate bird and said to Nei Katura,

“What a lovely bird, would you like it for a pet?”

and she asked them to follow it as it was looking for shelter for the night. But he heard everything. From the air, Te Obaia saw Nei Katura and fell in love with her instantly, flew back across the lagoon and settled on the roof of her house, just as the sun was setting.

The young men said to Nei Katura, “Katura, we have found you a pet, we shall catch it for you at nightfall”,

They thought it was a frigate bird. They built a bird rest for it outside Nei Katura’s house. But she began to feel sorry for it, particularly whenever it was raining and she asked the men to build a perch inside her house and moved it in there.

She found it very strange that whenever she gave it fresh fish to eat, the bird refused; it only wanted to eat what she ate. So they gave it some food but whenever they were not looking he removed his armour from his hands and head and ate the food. The cooks saw that the food was always gone and Nei Katura asked them to make extra food for them both. But they still did not realize he was half human. One evening he came out of his armour and visited Nei Katura in her quarters. Nei Katura felt his presence and asked,

“Nao, who are you?” and he replied,

“I am your pet frigate bird”, and when Nei Katura looked at him she could not believe how handsome he was, his eyes were deep blue and his skin was very fair. (It was said that people from the Sky had very clean, white skin.) They became man and wife but during the day he returned to his feathered armour to keep their secret intact until one day Nei Katura became pregnant. The gossipy cooks noticed that her orioles were getting dark and said to her accusingly,

“Katura, you are pregnant, aren’t you, look how dark your orioles are. We are going to tell your father, Terabanga” and they left immediately to tell the tale.

“Terabanga!”

“Who is it, come on in”

“Your daughter is in a bad way!”

“Why, what’s happened?”

“She’s pregnant”.


“Is she now? Just wait, I’m on my way. I feel sorry for the man who made her pregnant for I shall kill him”.

When he was alone with his daughter he asked her who was responsible and she said,

“My pet bird there made me pregnant!”

Terabanga looked back at the bird perched outside the walled house and said,

“This bird made you pregnant?” and she said,

“It’s not a bird, it’s a man.” Te Obaia the Feathered heard everything but carried on pretending to be a bird, grooming his plumes.

Terabanga said to Nei Katura,

“Tomorrow I want to see him as a man, tell him not to wear his armour” and he left walking under Te Obaia ‘s perch while Taboia turned his head sideways to watch him leave.

The next day Te Obaia did not bother to don his feathers any more and Terabanga came early to have a good look at him. He too was surprised at how good looking Te Obaia was. His skin was like porcelain, his eyes were blue (he looked like our idea of angels in heaven) and he said to Nei Katura,

“Very well, I give you my blessing, you can marry him because he is a foreigner; if he were from around here I would have killed him”.

So Te Obaia the Feathered stayed with Nei Katura, but what else could he do, all he did was eat and drink what was prepared for Nei Katura.
Chapter 31

The Quarrelsome Cooks

The old cooks began to get tired of him and complained about how much more work he created for them,

“He’s so useless, he can’t cut toddy, he can’t fish, and all he does is eat what the young men provide for Nei Katura, he must be the laziest man from his homeland”.

Each day the complaint got worse until Te Obaia could stand it no longer and said to Nei Katura,

“Ne, these old cooks are unbelievable; tomorrow I’m going to cut toddy,”

so at dawn the next morning he put on his feathers and flew off to Onaero, Baribari, Taubukinanti and collected as much toddy as he could and brought them back. (The owners of these toddy shells were surprised to find their toddy gone when they came for them.

(Toddy is a sweet sap obtained by slicing off pieces of young spathe of coconut flower, which has been tied in a bunch to stop it from opening out, the juice drips into a gourd or bottle. It is collected morning and evening and is used generally as a drink, mixed with water, like cordial. If it is left to ferment, it makes a very potent alcoholic drink and may also be used as vinegar when chillies and other spices are added to it.)

“Goodness, where have our toddy shells gone!”

Te Obaia lined up all the containers on the ground, went to Nei Katura and said,

“Tell the old cooks to go and collect toddy over by the ocean side”.

When the sun was up Nei Katura called out to the old women,

“Unaine o!” and they wondered what Nei Katura was up to next,

“What is it neiko?” they yelled back to her from the baroung (cooking shed)

“You must go and collect te karewe at tanrake”, (ocean side of the island). They were a bit taken aback and asked,

“Who has been cutting toddy?”

“Te Obaia the feathered man did early this morning” and they said,

“Oh we must see it to believe it!” and couldn’t believe how many coconut shells full of sweet coconut juice were lined up on the ground. They laughed aloud and said,

“That’s it, there would be so much kamaimai.”
Each day Te Obaia brought so much toddy back until the old cooks got tired of boiling vast amounts of kamaimai and complained yet again,

“Our eyes are getting black from the smoke, why so much toddy, there’s too much of it. Why can’t he go fishing? Doesn’t he know how to fish?”

When Te Obaia heard this, he was very upset,

“So they think I can’t fish, I will show them” and said to his wife,

“Tell the old cooks to make this string strong so I can use it as a string for fish (itua)” and he went to cut a branch of the ngea bush, about two metres long, made a hole at one end and threaded the coir string through it passing it to Nei Katura to give to the old women. Nei Katura called out to the old cooks,

“Unaine O!” she called (Old women O!) and again and they replied suspiciously,

“Neiko, what is it this time?”

“Make this string strong, weave it thickly and tightly” (kanoten)

“What does he want the string for?”

“He just wants it prepared and ready”.

They could not refuse their queen’s request. They braided a few hundred metres of the string and Te Obaia then threaded the rope through the hole at the end of the stick (itua ni ika), like a big needle with a thread hanging at the end of it.

Early the next morning he flew off on his fishing expedition – he went to the last fishing sanctuary that Teraaka frequented, called Atake where yellow fin tuna, sharks, marlin and other deep fish abound. It seemed like the fishes were there for his taking, all he had to do was show the spike and the fishes were drawn to it. He quickly filled up his string and then returned home before sunrise. He asked his wife to tell the old cooks to go fetch the fishes at the ocean side. Nei Katura called out once again,

“Unaine O!”

“What is it this time neiko?” They were getting fed up with too much toddy and were wondering what would be next.

“Go and get the fishes from tanrake!” and they said,

“We must see this to believe it!” and were dismayed to see how much fish there was, the pile was nearly as high as the roof of a hut,
“This is unbelievable” and started carrying them back to the village, little by little. They could not cope with the amount of fish so asked for help from the people and also shared them around. Te Obaia went on these fishing trips, day after day, until the old cooks got sick and tired of so much fish and complained once more.

(During these times their first daughter Nei Kirirere was born and she was followed by another girl called Nei Kirimoi.)

“We are tired of sitting by the fire, cooking and drying fish, why doesn’t he go and work in the babai pits”.

When Te Obaia the Feathered man heard this (it was the last straw, for legend has it that a white person disliked working in muddy, dirty places) and he said to his wife, Nei Katura,

“The time has come for me to leave you and I will take with me our elder daughter, Nei Kirirere and you will stay with our daughter Nei Kirimoi. When you remember our love all you need to do is look into the face of Nei Kirimoi and when I think of you I shall look into the eyes of Nei Kirirere”.

Nei Katura was heart broken but there was nothing she could do, for the fair and pristine Te Obaia could not bear the thought of cultivating babai in the dirty, muddy pits.
Chapter 32

**Te Obaia Abandons Nei Kirirere**

The next morning Te Obaia put on his armour, tied Nei Kirirere to his back and flew off. (Remember that before Te Obaia left his homeland, his father Tau Karawa had warned him not to bring anything back from his journeys, to contaminate the heavens.) As he was flying back Tau Karawa saw that he was carrying his daughter on his back and Tau Karawa summoned his other son, Tabuariki (a strong wind) and Tabuariki asked his father,

“What do you want me for?”

“I would like you to blow your brother off course, I don’t want him bringing a foreign being back, I have already warned him, but please don’t blow too hard or his daughter would slip off his back”. Tabuariki blew so Te Obaia would not be able to get much higher and he gave up and returned to Onouna.

Nei Katura was overjoyed to have him back and stopped crying. Te Obaia took a heavy clam shell, tied it to his shoulder as ballast and then put Nei Kirirere on top of it. He now had extra foreign things to take back. Tau Karawa saw all this and asked Tabuariki to once again blow him off course to stop him from coming back.

Eventually Te Obaia gave up, returned to earth and landed at a place called Temanoku (a bay - in Tabiteuea, the shape of the land below was like the shape of his bent body as he looked backwards and down – this name was later exchanged with another village in Nonouti).

Once he landed he began to divide Temanoku up into little sections named after the lands where his feathers had been gathered from by Taabunuea: Aumuriaki, Te-nanai-ni-man, Tekokone, Ata-ni-Karawa, Karawa-ni-karawa, Karawa-merimeri, Karawa-uatao and there was another place called Te Ruo-mai-Karawa (where his father Tau Karawa descended from the heavens when he followed him down).

The name of a place where the dead spirits went to in the heavens, Tebukeia was also given to another village in Tabiteuea and it is here that the whole story is going to connect as one.

Te Obaia and his daughter Nei Kirirere settled in Temanoku and when Beia-te-Kamaraia returned from Beru (as told previously) he married her and they produced Teboi and his sister, Nei Rakentai. These two were now humans. (All previous characters were either spirits (anti) or half spirit/half humans (anti-maomata) – with supernatural powers and physiques. (Beia-te-Kamaraia and Nei Kirirere where half spirits, Te Obaia the Buraerae, Tau Karawa and Nei Katura were spirits and so was Terabanga, Katura’s father.)

But let us return to Nei Katura when she was abandoned by Te Obaia the second time. When Te Obaia returned, her crying stopped and she was overjoyed but when he left with the extra ballast of a clam shell, she was bitterly heartbroken, she fell to the ground, dug it with her feet in anguish until she was eventually covered over with sand to become the small, edible shellfish (katura) that we now find buried on our sandy beaches.
Chapter 33

Teboi and Nei Rakentai

Now we go back to the tale of Teboi and Nei Rakentai, these two were in human form now.

But first the story of Teboi. He was married to Nei Komao and their first born was a boy called Mange, followed by Te Obaia te Koekoe-rikaki (who was living at Tabiteuea), and then Tiong (he settled in Nikunau) and the fourth was a girl called Nei Beia-tarawa (who married a man from Onotoa). The fifth was Nei Taabiria, who went to live at Nonouti with her husband, and the last was Nei Teuia. She went to live in Beru and married Teinai and their son was Kourabi, whose bones hang, to this day, at a maneaba in Buota (formerly Temanoku at Tabiteuea.)

The eldest son, Mange was adopted by Nei Rakentai (Teboi’s sister) who was now married to Teimauri, as she had no children at this time. She took him from Tabiteuea to Butaritari to settle at a kainga (ancestral home) she named Te-Wi-ni-Bike.

Now I am going to join all the stories together, particularly as it relates to the origins of Nei Rakentai’s husband Teimauri. Teimauri’s father was Rairaueana te I-Matang.

In a previous story, I told how a pimple between Batuku te Tabanou’s eyebrows (also known as Batuku te Ata) burst and out came Rairaueana te I-Matang. After the tree Kaintikuaba was chopped down and the expeditions on the baurua “Te Kaburoro” to Nukumaroro and Manra stopped, Rairaueana te I-Matang sailed “Te Kaburoro” southwards to Tabiteuea South.

This is now the genealogy of Teimauri (Nei Rakentai’s husband). When Rairaueana te I-Matang landed at a village called Katabanga it was completely deserted. A huge whale had beached itself on the ocean beach and everyone had gone to get a piece of its flesh. Rairaueana followed and saw two people sitting by, watching the proceedings: it was Tebuanna and his daughter, Nei Tebuariki. He asked them,

“What are you doing here, why aren’t you down there with everybody else?”

“My daughter and I, we want to go down and cut some whale meat but they won’t let us.”

“Wait here, I shall go and clear space for you on the whale”,

and chopped down a large branch of a pandanus tree and threw it over one end of the dead whale, scattering and killing some people in the process. Then he threw another one at the other side. When it was all clear he told them to go down and get what they needed. Tebuanna was so happy and indebted (e mara atona - his liver was so sweetened) to Rairaueana te I-Matang that he offered his daughter to him in marriage.

Their son was Teimauri of Tabiteuea South. Teimauri later married Nei Rakentai, the daughter of Beia-te-Kamaraiia and Nei Kirirere, from Tabiteuea North. Nei Rakentai had adopted her nephew Mange, and with Teimauri she had three children: Rairaueana the Great Warrior, (aka Rairaueana te Tia Buaka, named after Rairaueana te I-Matang, Teimauri’s father), followed by Natanga, next was Mangkia and the last was Nei Tiringa-atun-taai. All these people lived at Tabiteuea.
(The story of Rairaueana te I-Matang’s journey and genealogy has been the subject of a song from Tabiteuea South.)
Chapter 34

Kings were forbidden on Tabiteuea

In the old days, Tabiteuea used to be called Tabu-te-Uea (No kings allowed or kings are forbidden) because a group of very high ranking people lived in Tabiteuea at that time. There was Te Obaia te Buraerae, the illustrious son of Tau Karawa who came down from the sky to Temanoku; another was Rairaueana Te I-Matang, a distinguished man from Samoa who came out of the eyebrows of the Skull (Batuku te Tabanou/Batuku Te Ata) and there was also Beia-te-Kamaraia, the son of Nei Kimoauea, the daughter of Tabakea and Nunikai. These three people, who came from foreign lands, and settled at Tabiteuea, were all very important in their own rights, possessed of strong magic, tabutabu (taboo), and mystical powers. 
(Therefore it was not an easy matter to choose one to be king, over another.)
Chapter 35

Returning to the land of their father

Let’s now go to the story of the journey of Nei Rakentai and Teimauri from Tabiteueua. Their ancestors were foreigners from Samoa (through Nei Kimoauea and her son Beia-te-Kamaraia) and from the Sky (by Te Obaia te Buraerae), Rairaueana te I-Matang came from the eyebrows of Batuku in Samoa so they too were all foreigners, but they all ended up in Tabiteuea.

This is where these people of distinguished lineages came to be associated with the islands of Butaritari through Rairaueana the Great Warrior (Rairaueana te Tia Buaka who was named after his grandfather, Rairaueana te I-Matang). Beia-te-Kamaraia and Nei Kirirere died at Tabiteuea (Nei Kirirere was the daughter of Te Obaia te Buraerae) and were buried at Temanoku in a plot of land (makoro) called Tebukeia, a name brought from the Sky by Te Obaia te Buraerae.

Nei Rakentai’s children with Teimauri - Rairaueana the Great Warrior, Natanga, Mangkia and Nei Tiringatuntai decided they wanted to claim their inheritance from their grandfather Beia-te-Kamaraia (son of Nei Kimoauea with Kirata’s towel) so they sailed for Tarawa. There they found their cousin Bwebwentekai had claimed all the lands. He didn’t realize the eldest uncle’s children were on their way.

Accompanying Rairaueana on this journey were his sorcerers, Ten Tebai and Te Mataianti. The custom for Rairaueana was that when his house became old and worn, another one was built to replace it. His first house was in Tabiteuea. His second house in Tarawa was built in a village called Eita, a name brought from Nei Rakentai’s village of Eita in Tabiteuea. It is also claimed that (the god) Auriaria had a bangota (an altar – pagoda) here and that was where the two sorcerers were conducting spells and magic on Rairaueana.

One early morning his cousin, Bwebwentekai came and asked Rairaueana what he was doing on Tarawa and Rairaueana told him that he came to claim his rightful inheritance from his father, Beia-te-Kamaraia, the eldest son. Suddenly Bwebwentekai jumped around aggressively challenging Rairaueana to a fight, “Come out here and fight me if you think you have land on Tarawa”,

and Rairaueana the Great Warrior sprang up quickly to face him but he was held back by his sorcerers, who warned him,

“You must wait until the right time for your magic to pass (work), wait until your third house has rotted away and then you would be ready to fight your cousin.”

Te Bwebwentekai kept on baiting him but Rairaueana was bidding his time. When his current house rotted away they left for Tebonobono and Teimauri renamed this place Buariki (after his village in Tabiteuea South) and from then on it became known as Buariki (to this day). It was here that Rairaueana’s third house was built on the ocean side, facing the morning sun and receiving its warmth, and where he waited for the right time to pass for all the voodoo bestowed on him to take effect. His cousin Bwebwentekai never ceased tormenting him but his sorcerers managed to keep him under control. They were making him into a fierce fighting machine (te tia un) by feeding him charred coconut and while eating it steaming hot they invoked spells and magic upon him.

Eventually his third house was rotting down and his cousin, Te Bwebwentekai had not returned, for Rairaueana’s magic powers were starting to have an effect on him. When the house was completely
demolished, he knew the time was now right and his sorcerers encouraged him to go after Te Bwebwentekai. He looked for him on Buariki but was told Te Bwebwentekai had gone to North Tarawa. He searched him there but Te Bwebwentekai had moved on to another part of the island. His boldness had been weakened by the powers of Rairaean’s magic.
Chapter 36

Rairaueana rejects Nei Tebatunga

Rairaueana’s parents decided that it would be a good idea if Rairaueana got married so he would stop terrorising his cousin Na Bwebwentekai. They decided that his wife should come from Beru and they chose a woman called Nei Tebatunga, who was the niece of Kaitu (of Kaitu and Uakea fame and cousin of Teinai).

Previously I talked about a woman called Nei Teuia, who grew up on Tabiteuea North and who married Teinai of Beru. Nei Teuia was the daughter of Teboi, (Nei Rakentai’s elder brother) so she was Rairaueana the Warrior’s first cousin. According to Kiribati custom it is fitting and appropriate that Nei Tebatunga should be married off to Rairaueana, (to bind the two families even closer) so she was escorted to Buariki in Tarawa to her in-laws.

Rairaueana was not there to welcome her for he was in south Tarawa searching for his cousin Te Bwebwentekai (who had challenged him to a fight previously). He intended to kill Te Bwebwentekai when he finds him. One day he returned home and found Nei Tebatunga doing wifely duties around the house. He asked his parents who this woman was and they replied,

“We brought Tebatunga from Beru to be your wife, in the hope that once you are married you will be settled and calm and not go in search of your cousin Te Bwebwentekai to kill him. He is scared witless and you are still looking for him. We would like you to settle down and make a home with your wife."

When Rairaueana the Warrior heard this he said:

“My tabu (taboo) as a warrior and fighter from my sorcerers, Ten Tebai and Te Mataianti dictates that I should not lie with a woman for if I did I would be killed by my own weapon so you had better send this woman back to her home in Beru”.

Nei Tebatunga was sad, disappointed but most of all very humiliated and ‘lost face’ by Rairaueana’s decision. (She had travelled so far to be rejected. It is particularly bad form for a woman to be rejected and when considering she had no choice in the first place!) Rairaueana’s parents, Teimauri and Nei Rakentai tried to change his mind but he refused and said,

“If you want that woman, then marry her yourselves, for I cannot marry her or I will fall on my own weapon”.

In the end they gave up and Nei Tebatunga was returned to her homeland of Beru

Nei Tebatunga was the niece of Kaitu, (a warrior from Beru) and that was how the army of Kaitu and Uakeia left Beru to invade northern Kiribati (Tarawa) to avenge Tebatunga’s rejection by Rairaueana.
Chapter 37

Invasion of Northern Kiribati

During this invasion, Teuia told her son Kourabi to join this warring journey and asked that they must not fight the village of Buota (old Temanoku) in Tabiteuea for her brother Te Obaia te Koekoe Rikaki, (named after Te Obaia te Buraerae) lived there. When Kourabi (his nephew) arrived with Kaitu and Uakeia’s army, Te Obaia begged him to stay in Temanoku to avoid any bloodshed that might befall his own relatives. So Buota or Temanoku was spared by Kaitu and Uakeia’s army because of Kourabi’s presence there. Kourabi stayed there until he died and his bones can be seen hanging (to this day) in the rafters of a maneaba called Ata ni Karawa on Buota. (When this maneaba needs maintenance work, the bones are moved to another maneaba on Buota, called Kabubuarengana. These two public houses are his usual resting places, up to this day.)

According to legends from Butaritari we cannot say which islands Kaitu and Uakeia conquered on their way because each island has its own story to tell but we do know that when Tebatunga was sent back to Beru, Rairaueana’s mother, Nei Rakentai was worried about the consequences and said to him,

“You must be prepared because you don’t know what might happen now”.

But Rairaueana was preoccupied with fighting his cousin Te Bwebwentekai. Rakentai said to him,

“If you are a real warrior, you must throw your weapons to the northern islands” (meaning go and take Butaritari).

Rairaueana was ecstatic to hear these words from his mother, collected his army together and sailed for Butaritari.

Now let me explain the personalities behind the names of Kaitu and Uakea, warriors from Beru. Kaitu was a native of Beru and he was leader of his army. Uakeia came from Nikunau and he was a soothsayer (te tia kaiua ni buaka) – his job was to look into ‘a crystal ball’ when they reach an island and if things looked ‘uia’ (good) then they would go ashore and attack. But they never made it to Butaritari. Only Rairaueana reached Butaritari and now I will tell his story during his time there.
Chapter 38

Rairaueana the Great Warrior in Butaritari

Rairaueana was very happy to get his mother’s encouragement and he was looking forward to conquering the northern islands of Butaritari and Makin. His army left from Buariki and when they reached Butaritari they went ashore at Ukiangang. (It was only Rairaueana’s army that made it here – not Kaitu and Uakeia.) They found the population leaving for a village called Tenneve. Here at Tenneve, there was a place called Karawa ni Makin where Na Bakarubentaai and his two sons (Teinaura and Teribaura) lived and when Na Bakarubentaai died his son Nan Teinaura replaced him. They lived in a village situated between Butaritari village (on Butaritari island) and Ukiangang in a kainga called Tenneve.

When Rairaueana’s army was approaching this village he was astounded to find, standing in his way a very strange looking man: the man looked like he was floating on air, and he walked on tip toes. He was called Nan Teinaura, a native of Karawa ni Makin who was very well protected and empowered by the powerful black magic which the northern islands were renowned for.

Rairaueana asked one of his men to fetch him a throwing stick (kaini kare), which was long and thick. He threw it at Nan Teinaura who stood his ground. When the stick was thrown at him, Nan Teinaura boarded it and flew along with it until it stopped; he grabbed it and threw it back hitting half of Rairaueana’s army, who all fell domino-like dead on the battle field (much like in our game of te kare ngotu – a throwing game).

Rairaueana had never seen a throw like that before and could not believe what he saw.

He asked for another stick and threw it again at Nan Teinaura. Nan Teinaura flew on to it and stayed with it until it stopped; he ran with it and then threw it at the other side of Rairaueana’s troops. He hit and killed this lot as well. Rairaueana asked for another spear and threw that too at Nan Teinaura. Again Nan Teinaura jumped onto the weapon until it lost its momentum, grabbed it and threw it at the remaining army. They all fell dead too. Rairaueana now realized that may be it was not such a good idea to conquer any more lands to the north (Makin) and decided to befriend Nan Teinaura. He called him over, “Noo, come over here, I have something to tell you”.

The wild-looking Nan Teinaura floated towards him on tip toes with his catlike eyes darting everywhere, looking from side to side, staring at Rairaueana who stood right in front of him, and then Rairaueana put a proposal to him,

“My journey has not finished yet, how would you like to go with me to the lands to the north?” Nan Teinaura replied, “What took you so long to ask? No problem, I’ll go with you!”

(In Kiribati tradition from the beginning of time, if someone asks you for a favour or something, you must never refuse, and in this case if Nan Teinaura had refused, he would have been called a coward.)

So they became allies and marched through Butaritari from Tenneve (near Ukiangang) all the way to Kuma at the northern tip and there, standing in front of them was Nan Teribaura (mentioned above). He was also from the kainga of Toonimarawa. He stood blocking their way and Nan Teinaura said to Rairaueana,
“Do not touch this man or throw your stick at him for he is well protected in the same way that I am by the northern magic of Karawa ni Makin, from our father, Na Bakarubentaa. Call out to him and ask him to come with us”.

So Rairaueana called him over and asked him to go with them. Nan Teribaura readily agreed and together the two brothers, who were both well protected and all-powerful, natives of Butaritari, travelled with Rairaueana to Makin.
Chapter 39

Rairaueana finally breaks his tabu

While sailing to Makin, Rairaueana saw a hut at Ubantakoto where the mother (of Teinaura and Teribaura) Nei Teinaeta lived. She was queen at the time in this area and people from all around Makin and Butaritari would bring her daily offerings of food. Rairaueana asked the two brothers, whose house that was and they replied,

“Our mother Nei Teinaeta lives there, she is the queen”. Rairaueana asked,

“Do you have any problems if I killed her?” and they replied in unison,

“No worries, go ahead!” (reiterating the custom of never ever refusing a request – bubuti - or they would be called cowards.)

So Rairaueana killed Nei Teinaeta.

They then carried on to Makin where they landed at a place Rairaueana called Taraawa after his home island of Tarawa. They stopped and rested here for a while.

Amongst the inhabitants of Makin was an attractive woman called Nei Tooorooro. She visited Rairaueana all the time (remember that Rairaueana was not allowed to have any relationships women, as previously told) until they become lovers and he irrevocably broke the rules of his tabutabu. He finally fell for a woman from the North. He contravened the conditions of the spells cast upon him by sorcerers Ten Tebai and Te Mataianti. They continued to live together as man and wife.

(From then on, it is said that when foreigners visit our northern islands for work with the local councils or the government, the men often leave their wives for the charms of the northern women. These women follow in the footsteps of their ancestor Nei Tooororo who seduced the Great Warrior Rairaueana, a foreigner from Tarawa! Most foreign workers in Butaritari and Makin leave their wives and marry women from the North – it has been claimed!)

…but I digress…Rairaueana and his army, Teinaura and Teribaura were now resting for a while at Taraawa.
Chapter 40

Rakentai moves family to Butaritari

In the meantime the army from Beru (of Kaitu and Uakeia) was gathering momentum on its way to attack Tarawa.

Round this time too, news had reached Nei Rakentai and her husband Teimauri that Rairaueana had conquered the northern islands of Butaritari and Makin. They gathered their army together and set sail for Butaritari on their baurua (a huge ocean-sailing canoe) called ‘Te Kaburoro’ (The Brain). Travelling with them were their children, Natanga, Mangkia and Nei Tiringa-atun-atai. When they reached Butaritari they did not find Rairaueana there so they left the three children there and sailed for Makin.

From land their canoe was sighted and the people said to Rairaueana,

“There’s a canoe coming this way” and he said,

“Launch your canoes, we are going to kill them in the passage” and when the canoe was getting closer they recognize its signs (manna) and they said to Rairaueana,

“It looks like your mother’s canoe, ‘Te Kaburoro’, we can see its sign, the head (a real head), half a head and tassels (nimtawawa) flying behind. (Nimtawawa could be several lengths of ribbon-like material or white coconut leaves attached to a moving article and flapping in the winds behind it. It is also the name of a kind of jellyfish.) By seeing these signs they knew that the canoe belonged to Nei Rakentai. Rairaueana the Warrior said,

“Let’s ask her why she has left Tarawa”.

Once they landed at Tarawa the canoe was berthed on the reef and when they pulled the bung out to let the water out, a large amount of water flushed out digging a huge deep hole in the reef. (Nowadays you can still see that big hole on that spot, although previously you could always tell when the tide was about to turn by the turbulence of the water bubbling out of the hole.)

Rairaueana asked his mother,

“Who have you brought with you from Tarawa?” and Nei Rakentai replied

“Your brothers Natanga and Mangkia and sister Nei Tiringa-atun-atai” and Rairaueana said,

“Where are they?”

“They stayed behind at Butaritari” whereupon Rairaueana asked his men to launch their canoes to go and slaughter them.

Nei Rakentai scolded him and said,

“Nao, why do you want to kill your siblings, they are so young and helpless”.

and when Rairaueana heard this he was deeply hurt and said to his mother,
“Rakentai when I was in Tarawa you told me that it was fine for me to go conquering to the north and now that I am victorious, you have followed me with my brothers. Why didn’t you tell them to go somewhere else? It means that you wish me dead and your children to live and now I am leaving”,

and so he gathered all his men together, including Nan Teinaura, Nan Teribaura and the others from Tarawa and he set sail further north to the Marshall Islands.

Poor, sad Nei Toorooro his lover was left behind. She was so heartbroken; she cried so hard and stamped her feet fiercely on the ground that to this day, there is a huge hole (like it was dug by a bulldozer) near the cemetery at Anrawa (on Makin).

Let’s return briefly to Butaritari where Rairaueana’s siblings lived when he left to go further north. Natanga, his younger brother became the first king of Butaritari (this was such a long time ago it is difficult to calculate the exact year but it was thought to be around the 1300s) and the men he brought from Tarawa stayed with him there.
Chapter 41

Kaitu & Uakeia Invade Tarawa

Let’s now go back to the story of the war by Kaitu and Uakeia. Both Kaitu and Uakeia arrived in Tarawa after the brothers left it, looking for Rairaueana (to avenge the rejection of Nei Tebatunga) but Rairaueana was by now on his way to the Marshall Islands. Natanga heard about this invasion of Tarawa and he sent his brother Mangkia to investigate. When Mangkia arrived he found Kaitu and Uakeia’s men at a maneaba on Eita. He lifted up the eaves of the maneaba and asked the two leaders,

“Why are you here” (he was only trying to protect his inheritance passed down from his ancestors Beia-te-Kamaraia and Nei Kimoaeua).

Nobody tried to stand up against him so there was no war on Tarawa. Mangkia’s men were too strong for them. As a peace offering, Kaitu and Uakeia gifted Mangkia the island of Abemama and from him came the first king of Abemama called, Binoka (whose descendants continue to live on Abemama to this day).

Following is a katake (chant) about how Kaitu and Uakeia’s men never made it to Butaritari, they all dispersed on Tarawa.

Mangkia did not return to Butaritari, after he was given the island of Abemama by Kaitu and Uakeia, he went to live there. (He was called Mangkia because his jaws were so long and big and he was cannibalistic as well.) He was a giant of a man rumored to be as tall as nearly 10 feet tall (3.3m).

Because Kaitu and Uakeia never made it to Butaritari, we the people of Butaritari have a different accent from the other islands that Kaitu and Uakeia visited. We have an ‘Ee ni Meang’ (a northern accent - whereas most of Kiribati have an ‘Ee ni Maiaki’ – a southern accent). If they had made it to Butaritari it is pretty certain the people of Makin and Butaritari would also speak with an ‘Ee ni Maiaki’

This katake proves that Kaitu and Uakeia never made it to Butaritari and the words also mention that Mangkia went to live in Abemama as its king. This is how the chant goes,

Mani bubun taekan au tabo ooo
E tebe rongorongona te ba kataua rike te taetae
Taraia be tio baan te kai e nenewekin bukan au mata
Nna kabanea be e bane i matan te rawa i Butaritari
Be routaki te bae ni kabo n na imitia n na kabaka
E tio i Antakana ba I bonoti bukin kararangi ma kaewai
Be nang bara kainana be nang uki mataroan abau
E wanaria te waa n tutuo man neveaba
Ng anakora anakora te ara Te Bureimoa
Kabin te runga manin taberan te kai
E tangi ni moani ba o te tibarano are I kakau aaba
Be rangatake te boua e tabekaki mai ani karawa
That’s the end of the song. Also mentioned in this chant is the fact that Mangkia went to Namouea, Kuria and Abemama, given to him by Kaitu and Uakeia. Aranuka used to be called Namouea. He became high chief of Aranuka, Kuria and Abemama (he was the son of Rakentai who travelled from Butaritari).
Chapter 42

Natanga, the First King of Butaritari

Now we go back to Natanga who settled on Butaritari and became its first king. Once he was certain of his status, (after Rairaueana left for the Marshall Islands) he decided to divide his lands (both Butaritari and Makin) between his loyal men from Tarawa and the first one he summoned was Na Urareau, and said to him,

"Stand up with your family, your band of warriors and their families and go and settle on Makin, where you will find ‘te b’a uarereke, te binobino ni kamai ao te ika ni marawa’. Remember that I live at Antakana and will share the flesh from the belly of the fishes (buaren kanam te ika rikiriki).

So off they went to settle at Makin. (This means that at Makin they would find a plentiful supply of a small species of babai root, lots of kamaimai and deep sea fishes.)

He then called upon Toanuea (and his wife Nei Tiringa-atun-taai, his sister), another man from Tarawa and said to him,

“You go to Kuma to settle there, you and your family, your warriors, their wives and children. You will live there and what you will find are the small variety of babai, gourds of kamaimai and a lagoon full of whales” (te b’a uarereke, te binobino ni kamai ao te namo ni kua).

(Kuma is famous for whales regularly beaching themselves, even to this day, in its lagoon and this is also home of the callers of the porpoise, immortalized in Arthur Grimble’s book, A Pattern of Islands.)

He then turned to another clan headed by Teauokinibong, also from Tarawa and said,

“Teauokinibong, take your men, their wives and all the children and go settle at Keuea. Food crops waiting for you there are the small variety of babai, gourds of kamaimai and lots of breams”. (Te b’a uarereke, te binobino ni kamai ao te aua ni buti).

Teauokinibong gathered up all his warriors and went to settle at Keuea.

He then turned to Te Euri, also from Tarawa and said to him,

“Te Euri, your home is Tanimaiai, the food crops you will find there are the small variety of babai, gourds of kamaimai and the running mullets and remember that I live at Antakana to eat the flesh from the belly of the fishes.” (te b’a uarereke, te binobino ni kamai ao te aua ni buti), and so Te Euri and his men went to live at Tanimaiai.

These men I mention here are foreigners from Tarawa who came with Natanga to help him fight his battles. The meaning of the words, as conveyed to Toanuea at Kuma, for example, “kanami are imaimi te b’a uarereke, te binobino ni kamai ao te namo ni kua’ is the foods you will find there are te katutu, (a small variety of babai), te binobino ni kamai (a molasses obtained by boiling toddy which comes from the spathe of a coconut tree and stored in coconut shells or gourds, and namo ni kua, (a lagoon full of whales) at Kuma where whales continue to beach themselves even to this day.
When he told the headmen to remember him where he lived at Antakana (an old village on Butaritari) it meant that they had to bring foods to him (as their king) gathered from the lands and seas he bequeathed them. If they didn’t he would send an army of warriors to slaughter them.

Natanga remained king of Butaritari for a long time and continued to receive foods from those villages.
Chapter 43

Battle of the Kings

When he became old and near his deathbed, trouble began to emerge on Butaritari, for Natanga had two wives, one wife bore Kakiaba and the other one produced Kourabi. The half brothers went into battle (known as battle of the kings) to decide who would be king (if they had the same father and mother, there would be no need, as the elder one would automatically be crowned king).

Kourabi was defeated and Kakiaba replaced Natanga as king. Kakiaba produced two sons – Teitibonuea and Tetabakea. Eventually Teitibonuea became king after Kakiaba’s demise. Tetabakea became his brother’s ally (in custom if you share the same parents you remain loyal to your sibling).

Teitibonuea had a son called Teauoki. At this time Tetabakea lived at Tanimainiku in a village called Nakiroro and he eventually became king after his brother’s death. He had a son called Kautuntebuka, (Teauoki’s cousin).

One day when Tetabakea fell ill, Teauoki heard about it from Butaritari and he would visit the Old Man bringing his five wives with him. The women would work over Tetabakea, oiling and massaging his back, his stomach, his hands, before leaving at dusk. The next day they would come back again. (Teauoki was really trying hard to ingratiate himself to Tetabakea.) One day, Teauoki decided he would ask his cousins, Kautuntebuka and his brothers if he could take the Old Man (Tetabakea) back to Butaritari with him to look after him there. They agreed and he took him to Butaritari where his wives continued to take excellent care of him. The Old Man by now had became so indebted or obliged to Teauoki (e mara atona – literally means his liver was disintegrating from all the sweetness) that he began to forget about his duties to his own sons at Nakiroro.

Tetabakea was ready to give away his kingdom to Teauoki. He called him one day and said,

“Come I have something to tell you, on the first rising of the moon, when the moon leans northwards you must go and kill my son (that lives) in the northern side of Tanimainiku”.

(All his sons were well trained in warfare and combat, particularly at throwing weapons.)

Teauoki kept a watch on the rising moon and when it leaned northwards he challenged his cousin and killed him. He returned to Butaritari the same night and news of the killing quickly spread and Kautuntebuka asked his men,

“Do you know who he fought?” and they replied,

“His cousin Teauoki” and he replied,

“No worries, it’s a fight between cousins and if my brother can’t defend himself that’s his problem!”

Both Tetabakea and Teauoki waited awhile to keep it quiet and later Tetabakea said to Teauoki,

“When the moon is on the rise facing southwards you may go and kill my son on the south side.”
Teuoki waited for the right time and then attacked the second son. The next day, news of the killing was heard all over the island.
Chapter 44

Teauoki’s battle with Kautuntebuka

By now Kautuntebuka suspected that his father was behind all this and he gathered all his men together. (He wanted to get his father from Teauoki, back to Tanimainiku.) His warriors came from Tanimaiaki, Tanimainiku, Kuma and Keuea.

Teauoki was told of the impending attack by Kautuntebuka and he collected his men from Butaritari (village), Tabonuea (formerly Bangaki) and Ukiangang and waited at an open area (a marae for war) called Tebakauaona (close to where the air strip is located today). There was an itai (beauty) tree *(Calophyllum inophyllum)* by the beach on that piece of land with the apex cut off and replaced with a clam shell. It was very shady like an umbrella. Kautuntebuka waited with his men here. (The name of that place is not in the land title records because it was such a long time ago.) Teauoki and his men travelled from Butaritari and they stood facing each other; Teauoki took on Kautuntebuka.

But before he left for war, he had asked his five wives which of them was brave enough to accompany him to carry his weapons. The bravest of them all was Nei Temata-nimone. Sadly as the fighting went on Teauoki was speared by Kautuntebuka and the spear went right through his body, and Kautuntebuka said to him,

“Otea kaim Teauoki” (break my spear Teauoki) and Teauoki grabbed hold of one end sticking out from his back and with the other hand grabbed the end coming out of his stomach and broke the spear (made from the wood of a coconut tree and was extremely tough). Nei Temata-nimone then pulled the rest out of his torso and Teauoki rested against a young coconut tree (about two metres high) and he cried out to the coconut tree,

“Coconut Tree, be firm and strong for when you fall, I fall as well”.

Excessive amount of blood was pouring out of him. When Nei Temata-nimone saw Kautuntebuka charging at Teauoki again she stood in front of him and dispelled several blows aimed at Teauoki. She missed one of these spears (te unun, like te rere made with sharks’ teeth) and its sharp edge snapped the ties of her grass skirt and she stood naked in front of Teauoki. Amongst Kautuntebuka’s men was her brother called, Nan Toavea (he married one of Kautuntebuka’s kinswomen). When he saw his sister this way, he tore half a coconut frond and gave it to her to tie around her waist and then replaced her to dispense Kautuntebuka’s weapons.

Another of Teauoki’s wives, called Nei Bubura rushed in with a very special oil called Nei Tinabarutia. This woman was our ancestor, a wife of Teauoki from whom our great great great grandfather Nabuaka was descended. She rushed forward to meet Kautuntebuka as he was about to charge again and anointed him with this coconut oil that had been specially produced for the purpose of calming down people possessed of great anger and aggression.

(In Kiribati culture this perfumed oil called te ba ni kananga raoi – an oil to make someone favourable or lucky - may also serve other purposes and is still used today by people wishing for a job promotion, luck in love and any other good things one may wish for.)

As soon as this oil touched him, Kautuntebuka lost his fury and said to Teauoki,
“You have fallen, you are now defeated”,

and commanded his men to dig a hole in the ground next to him and he would return to push him into it later.
Chapter 45

Teauoki the Invincible

When Kautuntebuka returned to his army, Teauoki asked his defeated men,

“Do you have a canoe ready to sail?” and they replied, “Yes, ‘Te Kaburo”’

and he told them to carry him on board. So they all boarded, including the wives and children, healers, sorcerers and with other canoes carrying the rest of his supporters. His captain asked him,

“Where do you want this canoe to go”? And Teauoki replied,

“Take me to Tabiteuea South where my wounds would be cured on the magic stone (atinikana – altar or shrine) of my grandfather Teimauri”.

(and they lifted him aboard to take him back to his ancestral home at Temanoku on the island of Tabiteuea where his wounds and body would be healed and fortified on the shrine of his ancestors located at Kabubuarengana).

His wounds were very serious and each time he drew breath blood poured out of his chest and from his back. But Teauoki was a very special man; the cusp of his mortality (arin matena - similar to Achilles in Greek mythology) was under his big toe (left foot). That was how he managed to stay alive but if Kautuntebuka knew this no doubt he would have cut off this toe.

While on their way sailing towards Tabiteuea Maiaiki (South) one of his sorcerers ‘blew’ on his wounds and they started to improve; flesh began growing again in his chest and back and eventually they closed up. (The ukuki or art of blowing was a way of curing a disease using spells while blowing air onto the affected body part.) He was cured under Marakei (the island to the south of Butaritari so they had not gone far). He stood up and his captain asked him,

“Teauoki are you well?” and he replied, “Oh yes, I am well, I don’t think we would get to our destination, let’s turn the canoe around, let’s go back”.

His captain, Nan Tabaretannako said to him, “Where do you wish to go?” and Teauoki said,

“Let’s go back to Butaritari but first let’s go to Ukiangang.” The captain said,

“If you think we should return to Butaritari I would like to test how fit you are by asking you to turn the canoe around by yourself”. 

(The art of turning the course of a canoe is no mean feat, especially with the huge baurua of old. The top yard arms (teina ieta) were made of one long, heavy, pandanus trunk and the lower yard arm (teina inano) was another log even longer and heavier than the top yard arm and the mast was another very long trunk. For a full explanation on tacking a Kiribati canoe see here).

The sail was made from te ra, a peeled pandanus leaf, painstakingly sewn together. After he moved the sail to the other end single-handedly, the captain was convinced Teauoki was fit and so they sailed first of all to Ukiangang (a village at the southern end of Butaritari) There one of his men went ashore to check out the
situation for Kautuntebuka was now living in Butaritari as king, and he had two spies stationed in all the villages of Ukiangang, Butaritari, Tanimaiki, Tanimainiku, Keuea, Kuma and also at Makin. If rumours of an attack on the king started these spies would quickly inform the king and the troublemakers would be killed. There were two stationed at Ukiangang at this time. Teauoki’s canoe landed there for he wanted to tell his supporters about his intentions to avenge his defeat (with Kautuntebuka) and also to tell them that he was going to settle at Bikati.

The man’s name was Kirata-n-temanoku and he carried his weapon across his shoulders. But Kautuntebuka’s two spies were nowhere to be seen. Kirata-n-temanoku met with Teauoki’s kinsmen and supporters and told them that Teauoki was on his way to Bikati and from there he would launch an attack on Kautuntebuka and they must be ready. As he was returning to ‘Te Kaburoro’, Kautuntebuka’s two spies suddenly appeared chasing him. One of his sons shouted out to him,

“Kirata-n-temanoku, watch out they are chasing you with weapons” and he replied,

“Once ‘Te Kaburoro’ sets its course there is no looking back but may they eat the foams from the rudder of ‘Te Kaburoro’” (and by this he meant, “Where were they when I was on land and they didn’t stop me and now that my back is turned they decide to attack me”, he compared himself to the canoe ‘Te Kaburoro’ and “may they eat the foam from the rudder of ‘Te Kaburoro’” meant “may they eat my excrement”) as he fell dying on the beach under Ukiangang. ‘Te Kaburoro’ sailed for Bikati.
Chapter 46a & b

Teauoki Settles at Bikati

At Bikati, Teauoki divided the land up; where he and his family lived was called Tetawana, and the southern tip of the island he named Tabweera (this is where the warriors were groomed – *(where the soldiers were imbibed with magic and spells – kabwearaki - a manner of fumigating people in sorcery ceremonies, a kind of perfumed fumigation of persons and things – now commonly used as herbal smoking treatments for grass skirts to make them fragrant.)*) He named the second village Toorooro, boys of suitable age for battle lived here and to the east was Tebuaka village, the training ground for warfare. In the northern tip was Te tabo ni Maungatabu, which was reserved for warriors when their wives were menstruating and were forbidden (tabu) to be with them.

One day Teauoki went fishing (he was planning to take fish to his uncle Tetabakea back in Nakiroro and re-ingratiate himself). He also divided up the sea bed as follows: a portion directly facing Butaritari village (on the opposite side of the lagoon) he named Namo-n-Atei (children’s lagoon). It was said this lagoon was teeming with clam shellfish in those times and where the children were taken to be fed to make them grow strong to be warriors. The children were dragged along inside a long wooden container (kumete) and were fed raw clam meat and coconut. To the west of this was Namo-n-Ikawai (adults’ lagoon) where the adults obtained clam shells, even to this present day. There was also a reef between Bikati and Butaritari called Te Bonota ni Mata, which canoes can only pass at high tide. Here in this very deep lagoon, Teauoki ‘closed, the mouths of fishes so no one would be eaten or attacked by sharks and even now when people go clam shelling as far as Roteariki (an islet off Bikati) they are safe from man eating sharks (due to Teauoki ‘closing’ the mouths of man eating fishes from the time he arrived on Bikati until now).

Teauoki’s men continued fishing and gathering shell fish to fill up ‘Te Kaburoro’ with dried ika and vere to take to Tetabakea at Nakiroro, Tanimainiku. While they were fishing they chanted a song as follows:

*Matu ni bong ba a kautai itiribo te nao*
*Kaikini maora nako ma barekia te ngaina*
*Ba nna kautia tari ni ingabong*
*I a tang ma I a tang n nanoanga*
*Iaon ana nakura neinein baeu*
*Tenariki tena mauna tena kaitibora nako*
*Be na uana manokun te bwe*
*Ma tomaia ian bubun te kai*
*Na buniria mate kai ma te maoto n tara*
*Nna kaua matau iaoon tena mon*
*Na ukoria n au kanikina akeke ikai*
*Akea ba a bua, a mauna be iaki teieka*
*Ma tokia ma tonaua ma tena makorokoro*
*Nna kibara maungatabuna*
*Angi bungi ae tau te ara tenai te buki n aine*
Nna eveka moa tabon an te mako ma bikeni kaua ni bong
I a mate ni maku ba ana kanai
Antin Roteariki ma Tinanikun karawa
Ike e raroa ong.

(translation for this song not yet available)

Means the islets of Roteariki and Tinanikuni Karawa, (a land facing Bikatieta) were inhabited by spirits and this is where they fished for Tetabakea.

When the canoe was full they took it to Tetabakea at Nakiroro (his son Kautuntebuka was king of Butaritari at that time). When the food arrived Tetabakea was very surprised and could not figure out where it all came from. The men told him it was from Teauoki and he asked them where Teauoki was. They told him that Teauoki was now living in Bikati as his slave (kaai) to provide him with food. Before the men left he told them,

“Tell Teauoki to be prepared for me to give him a sign to come and see me here”.

Tetabakea shared the food with his son Kautuntebuka whereupon Kautuntebuka asked,

“Where did all this food come from?” and he replied, “from Teauoki.”

“Where is he?”

“At Bikati” and Kautuntebuka said, “I’m going to Bikati to kill him” and his father replied,

“Why do you want to kill him, he is living in Bikati as our slave to provide us with fish and clam shell”.

So Kautuntebuka did not go and he did not realize that Teauoki was building up his army to avenge his defeat. Teauoki continued to live in Bikati occupying himself with fishing and slowly building up his army again.

Kautuntebuka was now making the people labour for him – catching fish and working the babai pits – including Teauoki’s people who became his prisoners. One night a flaming fishing torch (oi) was seen from Bikati at a place called Neibuaia towards Kuma end and someone said to Teauoki,

“There is a fishing torch over at Neibuaia” and Teauoki said

“Lower the canoe, let’s go and see if they are Kautuntebuka’s men, if so we will kill them and take their canoe”.

So ‘Te Kaburoro’ sailed towards the light and they saw that they were Kautuntebuka’s men and killed them all. They brought the canoe back and dismantled it to build spears and weapons out of its timber. Another time a flame was sighted closer at a reef called Maren and a group of men went to check it out and found Kautuntebuka’s men again. This lot suffered the same fate as the previous lot and their canoe was turned into weapons as well. There was now a stock pile of weapons. (At that time there was a shortage of mature
coconut trees for making weapons on Bikati.) The next time there was a torch even closer at Roteariki and when they informed Teauoki, he said,

“Let’s just swim over and see if they are Kautuntebuka’s men.” (Kautuntebuka not only used his prisoners as slaves but also his own kinsmen.) When they got closer they heard a woman (who was left in the dark by her husband who was carrying the fishing flame) calling out,

“Toavea, how can you leave me behind, it’s dark and there are plenty of sharp rocks here”. Teauoki remembered the man named Toavea who was his brother-in-law (brother of his wife Nei Temata-nimone who gave her coconut fronds to cover her modesty during a battle) and he called out to him,

“Toavea!” Toavea was surprised and called out, “Who is that?” and Teauoki replied,

“It’s me Teauoki”; “Where are you?”

“I’m in Bikati but what about you, do you wish to stay with me or go back?” and Toavea said,

“I’m coming, I’ll stay with you” and he joined his brother-in-law Teauoki and lived at Bikati, assisting with the accumulation of fishes for Tetabakea.

When ‘Te Kaburoro’ was full of fishes once again it sailed for Tanimainiku to Tetabakea.
Chapter 47

Teauoki Ingratiates himself again!

This time Teauoki was on board and he instructed his men,

“If Tetabakea asks for me, tell him I’m staying by the canoe as its anchor “.

Roasted fish and dried clam meat were carried ashore and Tetabakea asked where Teauoki was and the men repeated what they had been told to say. Tetabakea told the men,

“When you return to Teauoki tell him he must come to see me when the moon is full.”

(He must have been drawing lots like a soothsayer to work out a suitable time for Teauoki to attack his son – there was no doubt he was so flattered and indebted by Teauoki’s kindness to him again – his liver was saturated with sweetness and kindness). The men passed Tetabakea’s message to Teauoki with further instructions,

“You must come with all your men when the moon is full. You must also arrange the older cured fish at the top of the load and the more recently dried ones should be placed at the bottom of the canoe”.

Teauoki continued to catch and cure fish and when the moon was full he arranged them as instructed. He was now ready to reclaim his kingdom. He took all his warriors with him and went on the baurua and headed for Tanimainiku. He also brought along one of his young wives on this journey.

Tetabakea asked him to unload the top layer of cured fish so he could give some of it to his son, Kautuntebuka, and the recently smoked ones on the bottom, he told Teauoki to deliver to the larger families in Ukiangang who would support him in battle. Teauoki did as he was told but before he departed he left his young wife with Tetabakea saying, “Here’s your fan” (iriba – in this context the word probably means “someone to make you comfortable - to take care of you and for you to do as you please with). No wonder Tetabakea fell totally under Teauoki’s spell!
Chapter 48a & b

Teauoki’s Second War

At Ukiangang he distributed the food to all the families, gathered his army and marched to Butaritari village for his second battle with Kautuntebuka. Kautuntebuka’s spies quickly ran to Butaritari to warn him of the impending invasion so Kautuntebuka went to gather his men from Tanimaiaki and Tanimainiku. Teauoki reached the battle field at Tebakauaona first (with the shady itai tree like an umbrella) and waited there for Kautuntebuka’s army. One of Teauoki’s men climbed up on top of the clam shell and watched from atop as Kautuntebuka’s men advanced.

A man from Kautuntebuka’s side challenged Teauoki before the start of the battle and said, “Teauoki, let’s play a bit before the real game starts” (they treated warfare as games)

and Teauoki jumped and jostled with him (while Kautuntebuka was organising his men). The business of real combat was being held up. One of Teauoki’s war soothsayers called Na Ururumakin was upset by this disruptive tactic and told Teauoki to move closer to the itai tree (so drawing his opponent with him there) and from above the man sitting on the clam shell was unhappy as well that the war was being delayed so he dropped the clam shell on the head of Teauoki’s rival. The poor man’s neck was broken and his head shattered. Then the battle began with Teauoki facing Kautuntebuka.

Standing on either side of Teauoki were his two brothers Manaraara and Tokintekai who were also fighting their cousins on the opposite side. But Manaraara would often withdraw backwards when he was tired or scared pretending that his armour (tanga - made of closely woven coir and covering the entire body) was undone at the chest (while someone else moved forward to take his place). On their heads the soldiers wore a helmet made out of the spiky skin of a puffer fish called tauti. They were allowed to do this but Teauoki had told the men behind Manaraara that should he pull back they were to face him with spears. When he did this he was surprised to be stopped by spears at his chest so he had to carry on fighting. Eventually Kautuntebuka was defeated and he escaped, with Teauoki in hot pursuit, to a forest between Tanimaiaki and Tanimainiku. There Kautuntebuka had more reinforcements from Keuea and Kuma and another battle took place here. But Teauoki had more men and by now Kautuntebuka knew complete defeat was close so he retreated. He went to see his father Tetabakea at Tanimainiku and said to him,

“This is the result of your actions. You wouldn’t allow me to kill Teauoki at Bikati, you said he would be our slave and now he has defeated me.”

Tetabakea replied, “I can’t help that, you are two brothers fighting against each other, do what is best for yourself”.

And when Teauoki’s men were approaching Kautuntebuka ran westwards to the bush and hung himself from a pandanus tree.

The rest of his army escaped to beyond the breakers. When Teauoki’s men arrived they found Kautuntebuka dead and they sat on the beach watching his men swimming away and lamenting:

Ea boboaki kabin te aubunga o!

(We are scratching the bottom of the shell!)
(They were hungry and remembering their food *te bero* (fruit of *figus tinchoria*) which they used to mix and mash inside a clam shell – possibly with coconut milk.)

Teauoki’s men waited patiently on the shore. Nan Takoro-ni-matang was one of the escapees, he hid behind a huge rock on the reef and when the tide rose he climbed on top, and when the tide went out he hid behind it. This rock is still there below the village of Tanimainiku and it is named - Nan Takoro-ni-matang!

After this victory Teauoki regained his kingdom and returned to live at Butaritari. It was common knowledge that he was able to do this due to Tetabakea being so indebted to him that he gave him all the knowledge about clairvoyance and forecasting the requirements of a successful battle. He now became known as the victorious warrior king.
Chapter 49

Teauoki’s Third Battle

This reputation was confirmed again when another enemy emerged during his reign in the form of another cousin, Rairaueana Te Manga ni Kaina. This man had the gift of the gab and was an excellent orator (e rang wi raoi – good mouth). While people were gathered at a maneaba at Bangkai for games, Rairaueana Te Manga ni Kaina travelled to Kuma and Keuea villages, where he gathered the people together, imbibed them with good stories and then asked them to support him in his plans to overthrow Teauoki. The people were so enamoured by him they readily agreed. He asked them to come early the next morning to attack Teauoki.

In the meantime late that afternoon, Teauoki accidentally heard of this conspiracy and asked,

“Where did Rairaueana Te Manga ni Kaina stop to recruit his army?” and someone replied

“Only at Keuea and Kuma”.

That night he and a companion called Na Bironga went to Tanimaiaki to ask for their support. When they arrived they saw a scary sight of a strange gathering of young warrior men walking around a flaming fire carrying spears. They were undergoing a ‘smoking’ or fumigating ceremony (kabwearaki). Hiding in the cover of darkness he asked Na Bironga to tell them he wished to see them. Na Bironga was frightened of the sight of those men and refused. So Teauoki called out,

“Mane o!” and they turned around pointing their weapons towards the source of the sound calling,

“Who is there?” and Teauoki replied,

“It’s me, Teauoki!” They asked,

“What news have you brought here?” and he replied,

“I’ve come to ask you to come over to Butaritari in the morning because I am expecting some visitors and I need your help” and they replied,

“No problem, we will come!”

They returned to the maneaba at Bangkai and joined everyone else including Rairaueana Te Manga ni Kaina - both of them waiting for their army to arrive the following morning. Early the next morning someone called out

“Teauoki, an army has arrived.”

Rairaueana te Manga ni Kaina thought they were his men from Kuma and Keuea and he took Teauoki by the hand and said,

“Let’s go and see who these men are” and they turned out to be Teauoki’s reinforcement from Tanimaiaki.
Rairaueana te Manga ni Kaina tried to escape but Teauoki held on to his hand tightly so he bit Teauoki’s hand. When Teauoki let his hand go, he ran behind the men from Tanimaiaki and then saw his men from Kuma and Keuea arriving. Teauoki’s men turned around to face the enemy and while the battle took place Rairaueana te Manga ni Kaina did not join in, he was swinging away from a pandanus branch while encouraging the men below to keep on fighting for him to be king. (His name Rairaueana the Pandanus Branch came from the fact that he was swinging on the pandanus branch at the time of his defeat.) When his men saw him like this they all ran away. Every one of them including Rairaueana te Manga ni Kaina were caught and killed. Teauoki regained his kingdom and his reputation as the victorious warrior king was now confirmed.
Chapter 50

Bunatao protects his inheritance

One day Teauoki decided he would share his lands amongst his kinsmen, mainly his brothers and cousins. He gave Bikatí to Taukarawa (father of Taranibeia who lived at Makin) and he kept Butaritari for himself although his heart was really set on Bikati as that was where he lived the longest and also where he claimed his kingdom from. One day he travelled to visit his adopted parents at Tenneve village accompanied by Nan Tonga-birin-Tarawa. We will leave the story here and go to...

...now we turn to the elder brother of Teitibonuea and Tetabakea who lived in Makin, called Bunatao. You will recall that Natanga brought foreigners from Tarawa and gave them land: Na Urareau in Makin, Toanuea at Kuma, Teauoki ni Bong at Keuea and Te Euri at Tanimaiaki. Bunatao was the eldest son of Kakiaba who became king after Natanga. He lived on Makin and he too was provided food by the people. When Kakiaba was still king, Bunatao massacred all the people from Tarawa: Na Urareau at Makin and the others at Kuma, Keuea and Tanimaiaki. He did this to protect his father, King Kakiaba from Natanga’s allies. He himself became king of Makin and was treated well there while his brothers, Teitibonuea and Tetabakea were respected in Butaritari.

One time when King Kakiaba went to Bikati, an uprising of slave families led by Itinua from Keuea massacred the other children of Kakiaba but only two survived Teitibonuea and Tetabakea because they were spirited away by their adopted parents. When the people on Makin heard about this they stopped their food offerings to Bunatao.

Bunatao then gathered his supporters and went in search of Itinua at Keuea and also to see what havoc he had done at Butaritari. He went to a maneaba at Tabontebike in Keuea and found Itinua there. Itinua saw that he was outnumbered so he didn’t initiate any fighting. Also sitting in the maneaba at one end was an old man called Na Burakan-taroka who began to chant (katake) urging Itinua to fight Bunatao. Bunatao knew what the song meant and Itinua ignored it. When it finished Bunatao stood up and said,

“I’m going to Butaritari first and then I shall come back”.

Itinua replied, “No problem” as that would give him time to gather more men together.

When Bunatao reached Butaritari village he saw the carnage there and found only two of his brothers left alive – Teitibonuea and Tetabakea. He returned with a large army and landed at Keuea and when Itinua saw their numbers he ran away. Bunatao chased him and commanded his men to kill all the families of servants at Keuea. Bunatao caught Itinua and cut him up into little pieces.

This is why on Butaritari there were no servant families. Bunatao returned to Makin and resumed his former status as there were no more supporters of Itinua.

(There is no class of people called servants (kaunga/kaai) on Butaritari since that time, everyone is free to work and labour for themselves.)
Chapter 51

Teauoki regains Bikati

Now we continue the journey of Teauoki and Nan Tonga-birin-Tarawa to Tenneve. He had been brought up at Tenneve and now his adopted parents wished to see him. He placed his weapon on a beam (tatanga) and then sat by Nan Tonga-birin-Tarawa’s side. They were waiting for food (babai and fish) to be served. But first the young men had to go and catch a “pig” way out beyond the reef. He asked what sort of pig lived in the sea and his hosts told him its a special pet fish (karon, humphead wrasse – Cheilinus undulatus) that they had been fattening up (like a pig). While he was lying on the mat waiting (with his hands under his head) he saw his weapon spinning around on the beam (as if it was moved by spirits, but then he was full of spirits himself) and he got up suddenly, apologised profusely and said he must leave straight away. He took his weapon and they left; his parents tried to keep him but he declined.

On the main road between Ukiangang and Butaritari he saw two men walking towards them, Taukarawa and Na Karakara. They were heading to Ukiangang. Teauoki said to Nan Tonga-birin-Tarawa, “Ao, this is my chance to fight this man now that he owns Bikati, I really want Bikati” and he lowered the tip of his weapon towards Taukarawa. Taukarawa quickly moved to the side of the road and Teauoki followed him. He fell by the side of the road and Teauoki said to him,

“Your land at Bikati, because you are a coward, is now mine” and his companion Nan Tonga-birin-Tarawa directed his weapon at Na Karakara and Na Karakara said crossly to him,

“Nao, why are you pointing your weapon at me, these two men are fighting for their land, what have you got to do with me?”

Nan Tonga-birin-Tarawa remembered he was a commoner and replaced his weapon. Teauoki said to Taukarawa,

“Remember I now own Bikati” and carried on walking towards Butaritari village.

Meanwhile in Makin Taukarawa’s son, Taranibeia (they were descendants of Bunatao), heard about Bikati being taken by Teauoki and he gathered his men together to fight Teauoki at Butaritari. He told his men they would congregate at Onne islet, some to walk on the reef at low tide from Makin past Kiebu and some of them would travel by baurua and they would sail altogether from Onne. While crossing the reef under Kiebu, Teauoki’s brother-in-law Toavea saw them and asked,

“Why are you travelling?” and they replied,

“We are going to kill Teauoki for taking Bikati from Taukarawa” and he said,

“Don’t waste your time looking for Teauoki, this is Teauoki too” pointing to himself since he was the brother-in-law. As soon as he uttered those words they killed him on the spot and cut him into small pieces. Poor old Toavea, he was left lying on the reef. They carried on to Onne, boarded the canoe and sailed for Kuma.
Chapter 52

**Tonganibeia betrays his brother**

Taranibeia had a brother at Kuma called Tonganibeia and he called on him. Tonganibeia was surprised and asked them where they were going. Taranibeia told him they were on their way to kill Teauoki for taking Bikati from their father Taukarawa. He asked his brother to join him and his brother said,

“That’s fine, but let’s get ready first”.

However, Tonganibeia was married to Teauoki’s daughter called Nei Matonga. He told her,

“Go, run along to Butaritari to warn your father that a killing party is on its way but pick up his brother Tokintekai at Nakiroro as your companion.”

Without anyone seeing her, Nei Matonga left and collected Tokintekai along the way. Meanwhile Tonganibeia kept his visitors busy, allowing Nei Matonga enough time to get to Butaritari. Once they finished their meal Taranibeia, the elder brother said,

“Come on we must leave” and Tonganibeia agreed and they set sail for Butaritari. When they reached Keuea, Tonganibeia said to his brother,

“Nao, I need to use a toilet” and his brother said.

“Just go by the aobai”. (Part of outrigger of canoe)

“Nao, there’s too many people around, please drop me on the shore”.

So they took him ashore (by Aanotua, a village in Keuea) and when he reached the shallows he looked southwards and could see sails of baurua flapping about (from Butaritari) and he said to his brother,

“Taranibeia you must return with your men because I have already sent my wife, Teauoki’s daughter to warn him”. Taranibeia was angry and said,

“Nao, you have two jaws” (two jaws - mangai uai – double dealer) and they turned course to return to Makin.

On the way they stopped at Natata, an islet off Kuma (near Makin, between Kiebu and the passage) to rest. They came across a man, called Itinaba, who was cutting timber for his house. Perhaps because they didn’t actually fight a battle they attacked poor, innocent Itinaba and killed him and continued on their way to Makin.
Chapter 53

Teauoki’s final battle

The next morning Teauoki gathered all his men and told them to bring their weapons and said,

“We are off to war at Makin but we must stop at Onne (islet off Kiebu) and from there we would walk across the reef to Makin”.

At Onne he chopped off the outriggers of all the canoes (baurua) telling his men,

“There is no return we would die here at Makin”.

Also accompanying him were his brothers Tokintekai and one other. On the journey he was informed about the death of his brother-in-law Nan Toavea by Taranibeia’s men. He was full of grief.

A woman ran down from Kiebu, whose name was Nei Tononoi. She stood before Teauoki and said,

“Teauoki, please you must return home, I plead with you, let us have peace” and Teauoki replied,

“Where were you when I was in Butaritari, why didn’t you ask me there?” “Now that I am in here you decide to stop me, if you had come to me at Butaritari I would have taken your request to heart” and they continued on their way to the tip of Makin and rested there.

Meanwhile Taranibeia had seen Teauoki’s flotilla sail in and he gathered his men together. He asked his diviner to see if the spot he had picked (to face the enemy) in the middle of the land would give them victory. The sorcerer said,

“Taranibeia, you will be defeated here”.

They tested several other spots before they found a hill, Aontoa and the sorcerer lied to him and said,

“You will gain victory in this spot”. They settled and waited here for the arrival of Teauoki and his men. Tebuanna, from Teauoki’s army whispered quietly to Tokintekai,

“Nao, let’s go and spy on the enemy up there to the north.”

Tokintekai agreed so off they went, without Teauoki’s knowledge. When they came close they were caught in a trap of falling wooden beams and Tebuanna pretended that his leg was cut and as he fell he said to Tokintekai, “I’m hurt”.

Tokintekai faced the enemy alone. He was quickly overpowered and killed. Tebuanna ran back to base and informed Teauoki of his brother’s death. Teauoki was angry and immediately roused his army and they went to battle at Aontoa. When the battle was in full swing, Taranibeia’s lying diviner was nowhere to be seen, he was swimming in the shallows between Makin and Onibike – he knew his side would be defeated. That area is now called Teurliba’a Swamp (Neinein Teuribaba) and the hill where Taranibeia was defeated and blood flowed is nowadays called Makuan te Rara (A place where blood flowed or flooded with blood).
Teauoki was once again undefeated and he was now confirmed as the victorious king in all his battles. He returned to Butaritari to live in peace as his enemies (cousins) have all now been vanquished. He lived there with his surviving brother Manaraara (Tokintekai died in Makin.)
Chapter 54

**A shellfish kills Teauoki** (Teauoki’s Dyke)

Teauoki decided he would build himself a house out on the reef to avoid the mosquitoes at night (down from where the current airstrip is situated by a village called Teraereke). He erected a dyke but the house was not far enough from land and mosquitoes still found their way there. He abandoned that house and started building another dyke below Te Rawa Rekareka village. He collected tall giant rocks (these rocks are still there today, they can be seen from Tabonuea village) and placed them strategically in a circular manner and filled the middle with other rocks and stones, and when high tide came, these rocks stood high above water level and they posed a danger to canoes crashing into them at night. This was where he would build his house away from the mosquitoes.

But the dyke was never completed; *(I mentioned previously that the cusp of his mortality was hidden in his toe)* for one day when he was collecting more rocks his toe was pierced by a pointed shell (*kabinea – mitra pontificalis*) it became infected and that was how he died, not from the numerous battle wounds he endured in his stormy life but by a tiny sea shell.

He knew he would die from that wound so he made arrangements for his son Te Atumateatata, to one day inherit his kingdom. He went to his brother Manaraara (who was next in line) and said, “I would like you to look after my son’s inheritance, after your demise, please pass the kingdom to my son.”

But elderly Manaraara had two sons, Na Abi and Na Buariki and he told them, “After I am gone I want you to assassinate Te Atumateatata”.

Both brothers became regents before Te Atumateatata was crowned and they started to plot against him. When the new moon was in its seventh day they travelled to Ukiangang taking Te Atumateata ta with them.

There the brothers secretly told the people, “On the first day after the full moon (tanimainiku) you all must go to Butaritari because our coronation would take place then (after killing this young boy)”. All the other villages were also invited to the coronation which would take place one day after the full moon (te rin tebongina). This news was kept very quiet (mabu) from Te Atumateatata. (Everyone from Ukiangang to Makin knew Te Atumateatata was the rightful king but were too cowardly to tell him of the plot.) They also went to Makin and told Te Akamatang of the plot.

His cousin, Te Mango overheard the conspiracy that Te Atumateatata would be killed on the day after the full moon and he started making plans of his own. By now the moon was full and the visitors were resting at Te Akamatang’s house. It was also raining heavily and the island’s young men and women invited young Te Atumateatata to a game they were playing. They were chasing a bird called te kewe (a curlew) around and presented it to him as a pet. (When it rains the wings get saturated and these birds cannot fly.)

Te Mango went to his wife and asked her to prepare a feast for Te Atumateatata as he planned to invite him to their house. Then he went to Te Akamatang (Na Abi and Na Buariki were there too) and asked where Te Atumateatata was. Te Akamatang replied:

“Ah, he has gone off with the girls and boys to catch te kewe at Te Rawa ni Makin, why?” And Te Mango replied,
“When he returns would you send him to my house, I would like to welcome him to Makin”

“Ok, that’s fine” said Te Akamatang and when Te Mango left he turned to Na Abi and Na Buariki and said,

“That man shows that he loves Te Atumateatata but when you are victorious I shall deal with him”.

Chapter 55

Te Atumateatata’s Fate is Sealed

When Te Atumateatata returned Te Akamatang told him to change his wet clothes and go to Te Mango’s house.

Te Mango returned to his house quickly after issuing his invitation but did not stay there to wait for Te Atumateatata. He told his wife that when he comes, Te Atumateatata should go beside a canoe inside a bareaka (canoe shed) and pretend to urinate close to where a bung (tikubono – a plug that stops water going into a canoe – these are usually removed from a canoe when not in use so as to stop the canoe from being stolen or used by other people without the owner’s permission.) He would hide inside the canoe and whisper through the hole to Te Atumateatata who would be putting his ear close to the hole. When Te Atumateatata arrived Te Mango’s wife told him where to find him and what to do so Te Atumateatata squatted besides the opening in the canoe and listened. (All the time people watched him so it was very difficult to find a private moment with Te Mango.) Through the hole, Te Mango whispered to him, “It is so sad about your kingdom Te Atumateatata” and Te Atumateatata asked, “Why?”

“Because you will be assassinated on the first night after the full moon (te rin tebongina) by your cousins Na Abi and Na Buariki, what are you going to do?”

“Ah, thank you for giving me this information, it is all right, I shall leave for Butaritari before “te rin tebongina” and I shall kill them on the last night of the renabaa before the full moon”.

When they finished, he went to the house and Te Mango took his time so as not to draw attention to himself and then joined Te Atumateatata at his house where feasting and merriment was going on in honour of the royal visitor. No one had any idea about what happened by the canoe. That night there were games of te kaburi-nako (throwing or hitting a turtle shell against an opponent’s shell and Na Abi’s rival was Te Atumateatata. When Na Abi threw his shell against Te Atumateatata’s he said, “Watch out for I shall hit you at te rin te bongina”, and this now confirmed what he had been told. When Te Atumateatata’s turn came, he provoked Na Abi, “And you, you watch out for I shall get you at te renabaa”, and Na Abi stood up and said angrily, “What do you mean by te renabaa?” and Te Atumateatata asked, “Well what do you mean by te rin te bongina?”

and by now all the old men were gathered around and they begged them to stop arguing, after all it was only a game.

The next day Te Atumateatata left Makin for Butaritari and it was now ‘te renabaa’ and the following day would be ‘te rin te bongina’. He knew his cousins would soon follow because the next day was supposed to be the day of his assassination. When he reached Butaritari he went to the first of the four maneaba (clan houses) at the time of the kings, called Te Tokanimata, where his cousin Na Unaia was the Old Man and asked him to help fight Na Abi and Na Buariki. Na Unaia readily agreed and admitted that he knew about
the plot but was too scared to tell him. After that he went to the second maneaba, Te Nikierere where the Old Man was another cousin, Moanteata and asked for his assistance as well.

“Moanteata can you help me carry the weapon of my father Teauoki?”

(this weapon was called Kaure ma Atuna (Open the head) — a heavy square-shaped piece of wooden beam about three metres long, with the mitred corners embellished with rows of sharks’ teeth, two sets facing one way and on the opposing sides the rows of teeth faced the other way. These lines of teeth were arranged about half a metre from both ends of the beam.) Moanteata also agreed and said,

“You almost missed out on your inheritance for tomorrow is when you are supposed to die.”

And then he went to Tataua of Te Akatataua maneaba and he too readily agreed. He was only taking close relatives along instead of an army.

He then went to the last maneaba, Kabubuarengana, our ancestor Na Buaka’s maneaba and Te Atumateatata asked him,

“Do you mind, would you like to come with me tonight (te renabaa) to help carry the weapon te Kaure ma Atuna, I am going on a ‘killing spree’” and Na Buaka replied,

“No problem, I will come with you.” Na Buaka was his younger half brother.
Chapter 56

**Killing Na Abi & Na Buariki**

In the meantime Na Abi and Na Buariki’s supporters gathered at the king’s compound which was situated close to the current site of the Co-operative Store near what is now known as King Wharf in Butaritari village. Na Abi was inside his fenced house and Na Buariki was in his own house on the north side of the compound, also enclosed with a fence and a gate. That night (te renabaa), before midnight the beam was brought to Na Abi’s door and Te Atumateatata called out,

“Na Abi!” and Na Abi replied running to the door, “What is it, who is there?”

“This is Te Atumateatata, come out here!”

Na Abi ran out with only a short spear (te unun – with sharks’ teeth attached on to it) for he thought he was facing only Te Atumateatata, he didn’t realize his cousins and brother were there too. When he stepped over the beam placed on the ground, Te Atumateatata’s men lifted it up and all inside his legs and crotch were shredded to bits as Kaure ma Atuna was twisted over and over until he fell dead on the ground.

They then took the weapon over to Na Buariki’s door and this time they were accompanied by their brother-in-law, Toanikeaki. Te Atumateatata called out once again,

“Na Buariki, Buariki!”

“Oo, who is it?”

“Come out, it’s Te Atumateatatata” and Na Buariki ran out with his unun and when he crossed Kaure ma Atuna on the floor, he too suffered the same fate as his elder brother. Their bodies were laid out side by side in the king’s maneaba, called Te Atu nu Uea (Home of the kings), near the current site of the wharf.

But before Te Atumateatata left Makin he arranged with Te Mango that he should follow him (to Butaritari) the next day (te rin tebongina) and he should watch out for someone under the itai tree (at Bakauaona, under the umbrella tree) waving his white kaba (a wrap – lavalava or sarong) which would signify that he had won. If he did not see anyone then he would have to fend for himself (meaning Te Atumateatata was defeated and all his supporters would be killed).

So Te Mango sailed from Makin but his cousin Te Akamatang saw him and said,

“Te Mango, I’m coming with you” *(remember he was the enemy)*

“No problem, sure, come on board”,

and off they went with Te Mango steering the canoe. During the trip Te Akamatang was lying on the canoe pretending to be asleep and when they reached the passage to Butaritari, he suddenly jumped up and said,

“Te Mango I had a very mysterious dream”, and Te Mango asked,

“What was it about?”
“Nao I dreamt about a bird flying over the canoe and I smashed its head (borauea) and its blood dripped onto the canoe” (meaning that if his people won – the two brothers – that’s what he would do to Te Mango); and Te Mango said,

“Wow, that’s a very scary dream”.

As they reached the lagoon of Butaritari, Te Mango asked Te Akamatang to steer while he stretched his back out (he was going to keep a watch out for someone flying a lavalava under the itai tree at Bakuuona). After the death of the two brothers the previous night, Te Atumateatata waited for the canoe under the itai tree. When he saw the canoe approaching he shook his white kabae and Te Mango knew then that he had won. He jumped up and said,

“Te Akamatang, that’s it” and Te Akamatang asked,

“What happened”,

“I too dreamt of a monstrous bird and when I bashed its head, its blood dripped all over our bodies” (he was talking about Te Akamatang).

When they reached Butaritari they beached the canoe, without bothering to take the sails down, and Te Akamatang rushed ashore thinking that the brothers had won. He was shocked to see their bodies lying side by side and said in disgust,

“Ha! What a bunch of children these men are”, and took the canoe back to Makin.

Te Atumateatata showed his gratitude to Te Mango by rewarding him with a great deal of land on Makin. (This was known as Te Atumateatata’s War, the one after Teauoki’s wars.)
Chapter 57

The End of the Kingdom of Butaritari

After the death of Te Atumateatata, his son, Te Itimaroroa replaced him who was in turn replaced by Na Bureimoa. Na Bureimoa was alive in the 1880s and it was during his reign that a ship from England called “The Royalist” skippered by Captain Davis, arrived in Kiribati and he raised the Union Jack at Taratai village in North Tarawa which made these islands a British colony.

Na Bureimoa was replaced by his son Taabu who had two wives, Nei Kamakiata and Nei Bukanibeti. With Nei Kamakiata he produced Na Kaiea and Nei Tabanou and with Nei Bukanibeti he fathered Na Koriri and his siblings. After his death Na Kaiea took over and because he had no heirs, there was a dispute about who should replace him: Nei Tabanou had a daughter, Neeri but she was deemed illegitimate and therefore underserving so Na Koriri (from the second wife) was crowned king. After him, his son Na Uuraura became king (during the 1960s) and when he died the dispute was still raging, with some people taking Neeri’s side and others supporting Na Uuraura’s heirs or Na Koriri’s siblings. With all this disarray, the kingdom of Butaritari ended with Na Uuraura’s death in 1963 (with the intervention of our colonial rulers).

Each person was now king of his own destiny, so long as he has plenty of lands, babai pits, pigs and karewe (toddy produced from sap of coconut tree) he is wealthy and that is the situation on Butaritari (and Makin) until this day.
Chapter 58

Genealogy part 1

Nan Tongo of Tabokao

Now let me explain the family tree of Nei Rosa, beginning from the spirits to humans.

I shall start with her great grandfather (my grandfather) Nan Tongo, the grandfather of all the families (kainga) of Tabokao (a village within Butaritari village), Nan Tongo’s beginning from Karawa (Heaven where the spirits lived).

In the course of his labour, the Sun god created Raure-ni-Ngaina (Sunrise) and Bo-ni-mainiku (Sunset) and they had a son called Taukarawa. He married Nei Terieri (from Te Uekera tree) and they produced Te Obaia the Feathered Man.

Te Obaia the Feathered married Nei Katura and produced Nei Kirirere.

Nei Kirirere married Beia-te-Kamaraia (the son of Nei Kimoauea) and they produced Teboi and Nei Rakentai.

Now we go to Rakentai’s children when she married Teimauri.

Her son, Natanga was the first king of Butaritari (the elder son Rairaueana having left in unhappy circumstances for Mille in the Marshall Islands).

After Natanga, Kakiaba became king; Kakiaba was replaced by Teitibonuea and after him, Teauoki. One of Teauoki’s wives was a woman called Nei Bubura (in the story she anointed Kautuntebuka with the magical oil Nei Tinabaratia) and together they produced Na Buaka.

Na Buaka fathered Na Buatanga.

Na Buatanga produced Nan Tongo.

Nan Tongo (with his wife Nei Aonibai) produced Irima (Irma), Betero (Peter), Ioane (John), Itabera (Isabella) and Iakobo (Jacob). That is the origin of Nan Tongo’s family tree from the spirits to humans.

The following is the translator’s own addition to the family tree to include later members of the family and other stories.

(*Note* By this time Catholicism had reached Butaritari round 1880 and Nan Tongo was chosen by Brother ? to be the first catechist on Butaritari, (after saving his life - see separate story on Nan Tongo). He asked Nan Tongo to give all his children Christian names and this tradition has continued throughout the family, previously as their faith became stronger and later as they inter-married with people of European extraction and became educated in western ways. The sad consequence is that Christian names do not usually show family connections, unlike I-Kiribati names.)

Irima’s first husband was Mr Edwards, an Australian with whom she had a son Simon.
Stories from Butaritari as told by Tinaua Ioane at Butaritari in 2004
translated by Rosa Muller at Darwin in 2009

Simon married Caroline Greig of Beru, Fanning Islands, and Cook Islands. They had thirteen children:

  Monica (married Tom Pickering of Fiji, family in Fiji)
  Johnnie (Kiribati)
  Victor (children are in Solomon Islands and Australia)
  Lavinia (married Peter Dreaver of NZ, now living in NZ)
  David (Kiribati)
  Hughie (Kiribati)
  Irima (married Teken Tokataake, a descendant of Binoka of Abemama, Kiribati)
  Peter (married Christina Muller, now of Christmas Island)
  Julia (married ...Wolfert, currently lives in Germany)
  Willie (Kiribati)
  Ella (deceased – no issue)
  Rinn (married Remy of Philippines – Kiribati)

Irima later married Boer (nicknamed Abo) – a Chinese trader at Tabiteuea and Nonouti:

  Elsie (married Maxmillian Brechterfield of Abemama)
  Mary (Solomon Islands)
  Callista (married ? of Australia)
  Maxine (married ? Driscoll of Australia)
  Stella (married Philip Gibbs of NZ)
  Frida (married Tim Nolan of UK)
  Chris (married Tue of Nauru)

Christina married Dr Turutana of Onotoa

  Nei Arib
  Nei Motiman
  Ariera

Tereere married Timeon of Tabiteuea

  Taberannang
Chapter 59

**Story about Teraaka**

There were two men named Teraaka, Old Teraaka and Young Teraaka. We shall begin with the story of Old Teraaka.

But first let us go back to the story about the journey of Auriaria to a place called Hawaiki in the abyss where Taranga lived. While he was there, he despatched his pet a fish called the tau and when that fish shot up through the depths of the ocean from Hawaiki (Bikati and Bikatieta were one land at that time) it pierced and separated one end of Bikati (thus creating Bikatieta). On Bikati at this time there lived a giant called Na Ubabati, he was huge, and he too came from the Lands of the Giants, Makaiaio which was located on the top of Kaintikuaba. When the tau broke up Bikati, Na Ubabati did not see it as it flew into a pond full of birds (Nei ni Man) at Tanimainiku and ended up at the breakers (waiwai) in the sea. At Tanimainiku village lived another giant called Naunta. He grabbed that fish when it came up, pulled its head off and threw it onto land where it landed on a place now called Tabon te Tau (Te tau Point) also at Tanimainiku.

Auriaria then dispatched another pet, the aii (coconut crab) from Hawaiki (Taranga was still there). The aii crawled up to Bikati (the tracks can be seen to this day on the reef) to a place called Bukin-tearo-teniai and increased the size of Bikati and Na Ubabati caught him and pulled its shell off. This shell can be seen at Tabon Tikobia between Bikati and Bikatieta. Auriaria came searching for his pets and saw the corpse of his pet the aii and said to Na Ubabati who stood before him,

"Are you the person who killed my pet" and Na Ubabati said,

"Yes, he broke up my land” and they fought until Na Ubabati was killed and his body was dumped in a bed of seaweeds at Tabontebike (people of Bikati know this) and his navel laid in the middle of Bikati (for he was lying crosswise).

Then he went looking for the tau, saw that it was dead too and then searched out Naunta. He pushed Naunta underwater by Tanimainiku until he drowned. Nowadays the area where Naunta struggled before he drowned can still be seen at that spot by very turbulent waves.

That is the introduction to the story of Teraaka.
Chapter 60

Teraaka the First

A man called Te Bongiroro and his wife Nei Kamauarekea settled at the Nei Ni Man, (pond of birds) a hole at Tanimainiku. They had 4 sons: Teraaka, Kabaki, Te Aroba, Te Manrin and the fifth was a girl called Nei Akintai (not Nei Rakentai).

While the children were growing up, their father Te Bongiroro built a series of houses containing knowledge and secrets, the first was a House or Well of Navigation (Maniba ni Borau), the second was a One-pole House (Te Boua Teaina) and the third was a House of Night (Te Uma ni Bong). The hut of night had a window close to the ground and another close to the roof. A single pillar of rock supported the one-pole hut and if it slipped the roof would fall on the ground and no air could get inside it.

When Nei Akintai was a bit older she asked her father if she could join her brothers on their journeys to see where the fishing grounds were for catching bonitos (roa ati) called Te Betia ni Borau. They were gone for quite a long time.

After they left their mother gave birth to another daughter they called Nei Manganibuka. Also living with them here was an old woman called Nei Kanamakuna. When Nei Manganibuka was in her teens, her father asked her to fetch some water from the Well of Navigation and said,

“After getting the water I would like you to stir the bottom of the well and look to see in which direction the turbulence is going”.

Nei Manganibuka did as she was asked and noticed that the turbulence was headed west. (Te Bongiroro already knew this but asked anyway. It meant that his sons’ canoe was going westwards.) After a few months, Te Bongiroro asked again for some water from the well,

“Fetch me some water and have another check which way the turbulence is going”

and Nei Manganibuka reported that it was going north, the canoe was going northwards. A few months passed and then Te Bongiroro asked for more water from the well,

“Go fetch the water and check which way the turbulence is heading”.

Nei Manganibuka checked again and saw that the turbulence and told her father it was going eastwards, which meant that her brothers’ canoe (together with Nei Akintai) was now heading home. They had no idea they had a sister at home.

Te Bongiroro began to explain to Nei Manganibuka the secrets contained in each of the three houses he built. Her brothers did not know of the existence of the top window in the House of Night. (The village of Nakiroro was named after him.)

Te Bongiroro again asked for water from the well and said,

“Have another look at where the current (turbulence) is going” and Nei Manganibuka saw that it was slowly moving southwards. (The well was like a crystal ball.)
Chapter 61

Nei Manganibuka follows her brothers

Nei Manganibuka now decided that she wanted to follow in her brothers’ wake. She informed her father that she wished to take the current herself and he prepared for her a branch of a tree te buka (*pisonia grandis*) as her float. This tree survived at sea and Nei Manganibuka ate its leaves on her long journey. (From this craft her name was now confirmed as Nei Manganibuka.) She floated along with the current until it stopped at Marakei and she decided to wait here for the next one. At a maneaba four old ladies sat on each of the four sides, weaving mats all day; they were the controllers of the flow of the ocean currents. (These old ladies were spirits and the people of Marakei would know their full stories.)

When the old lady on the west side was throwing the leaves of her mat behind her as she wove, she cried out, “The current is heading eastwards”.

A few days later, the woman on the northern side yelled, “Ah! The currents in the depths of the ocean are heading northwards, they’re going north!”

“The currents are going westwards!” said the woman on the east side later.

Nei Manganibuka already knew all this.

After a few more days, the woman on the south side cried out as she flicked the pandanus strips behind her, “Currents go south. These are good currents, they are mild and gentle!”

And Nei Manganibuka knew this was the cue for her to continue her journey. She floated along once again on the branch, with the current going southwards and eventually landed at a village called Murubenua in Nikunau.

At this village Nei Manganibuka was welcomed ashore by a man called Te Mataimoa who made her his wife. Their first child was a boy and Te Mataimoa named him after himself saying,

“I shall call him Te Mataimoa the Younger since he is a boy and the eldest child belongs to me. I am going to teach him everything there is to know about roa ati (fishing for bonitos with rod and line), all the knowledge from Nikunau.” His wife could not argue with him.

(In Kiribati custom the first born is always named (ingoanaki) by the father or his family and the second child by the mother’s family and then alternatively. People outside the family may ask to name babies but there are sets of rules and traditions to follow, the same as in adoptions. There are strong binding commitments.)

Te Mataimoa began teaching his son everything he knew about te roa ati and showed him where the fishing grounds were, there was one in Tarawa and another at Maiana. Te Mataimoa the Younger was so good at catching bonitos and later on he asked his father,

“Is there any more?”

“Yes there is, it is located at Tikurere in Butaritari” and his son said,
“Do you mind if I go fishing there?” and Te Mataimoa replied,

“No problem, you can go tomorrow!”

As Te Mataimoa the Younger was about to leave, Nei Manganibuka said to her husband,

“How can you send our son to the north, the ocean is very rough there”, and her husband replied,

“The ocean is calm.”

(What Nei Manganibuka meant was that her brothers’ canoe was at Tikurere (their territory) and they would kill whoever came by, including Te Mataimoa the Younger.)

But Te Mataimoa was insistent and allowed his son to go and Nei Manganibuka was heartbroken. At sunrise one morning while the four brothers were on their canoe fishing, they were surprised to see another canoe approaching and Teraaka said,

“This canoe seems to know our secret fishing place; I am going to kill it (the occupant)”. He called out,

“Nako mai!” (Come here!)

And invited Te Mataimoa the Younger to come close to their canoe and then they killed him. (They did not know about their sister Nei Manganibuka nor that this was her son.) They took his head back to Nakiroro at Tanimaiaki and placed it in the roof of the One-Pole House, facing south. They continued to fish at Tarawa, Maiana and other fishing places.
Chapter 62

Teraaka the Younger

After a while back in Nikunau, Nei Manganibuka said to her husband,

“Because of your stubbornness where is your son now? He is never coming back, it’s been days, weeks, months now.”

Eventually she had another son and this time she named him Teraaka the Younger, after her elder brother, Teraaka. (You will remember previously I said there were two men called Teraaka, the Elder, Te Ikawai and the Younger, Te Tei). When he was older she taught him everything about roa ati, all the knowledge from the North, where all the fishing sanctuaries scattered in the oceans were and Teraaka went to all of them. Still not satisfied, he asked his mother,

“Is there any more?”

“Yes, there is, it is located in Butaritari near Tikurere and I will tell you how you go about getting there.” (This time Nei Manganibuka was the boss of the second son, not Te Mataimoa.)

“Tomorrow you must go and fetch four young (drinking) coconuts and four pieces of coconut palm leaves as I wish to prepare provisions for you”. She made four baskets from the palm leaves and put pandanus fruit paste mixed with grated coconut (te manam) into them and set them aside with one coconut each instructing her son,

“Tie each of the coconuts to each basket of food. When you reach your destination you will find a canoe floating there. It belongs to my brothers, but they don’t know about my existence, because they left home before I was born, when they took my sister Nei Akintai for a tour of the oceans. When you reach them you must act quickly by giving a basket and coconut to the first man at the stern of the canoe. That’s Teraaka, but don’t say his name. Give the second man another basket and coconut, that’s Kabaki. Give the third man, Te Aroba another set and the last you present to Te Manrin. Because of this act of kindness they are going to catch a fish for you but it would not land because their lure (kaneati – mother of pearl bait for fishing tuna/ati) is different, theirs is Te Ibika-ni-karakara and yours is Te I-Tikurere” (It is said that the lure from the North Te I-Tikurere, fashioned from the mother of pearl shells (baeao) found off Tikurere is more attractive to fish than any other kind.)

Then she instructed him on how to avoid being trapped at sea,

“There would be pairs of flying fishes (onauti – Exocetius volitans) flying into your canoe with their umbilical cords joined together. As soon as you think you have sufficient fish for your return trip, you must cut the umbilical cord off a fish at your foot and the rest will then become separated and fly off in different directions. You must be careful not to take too much fish or they will sink your canoe.”

(Originally te onauti flew side by side in pairs, connected by their umbilical cords until Teraaka performed this task.)
"Next they will try and trick you with a fish called te raewa-nei. This fish is like a saw, if its fins touch your canoe it would tear it to pieces. Turn your canoe around before you reach it and aim for the passage to Nakiroro."

This is once he reached Tanimainiku and on his way back. (The raewa-nei has not been seen in recent times and it is thought to be extinct.)

When his instruction for his sea journey was finished, his mother then told him what to expect on land.

"My brothers would take you to their father Te Bongiroro at the Nei ni Man (Pond of Birds) but on your way there you must tie the ends of the coconut fronds together because one day they would chase you and their feet would be caught in the leaves and fall and they would not be able to catch you."

She taught him everything that he needed to know.

The next day when everything was ready Teraaka began his odyssey. When he reached Tikurere at sunrise, he saw a canoe floating in the lagoon like his mother had told him. When Teraaka saw the canoe approaching he said to his brothers, "Here comes another canoe, wait for it, we will kill it" (occupant).

Nei Manganibuka had previously told him about his elder brother, "You had a brother, they killed him and his skull is in the One Pole House. Bring it back with you together with your grandfather, Te Bongiroro, back to Nikunau."

Teraaka the Elder saw Teraaka approaching on his canoe and said to his brothers, "Let him come closer, we will hit him and kill him" and then yelled out to him, "bring your canoe closer, close to ours" but Teraaka the Younger didn’t let him finish, he interrupted, "You, the one at the end of the canoe, this is your food and drink", and Teraaka the Elder thought, "Oh, this young man is so generous!"

Teraaka the Younger distributed the rest of the basket of food and coconuts to the other three men and they all agreed that he was very kind and that they should repay him by a catching a fish to eat. The asked him to move his canoe a little further so they could drop their line. (Nei Manganibuka had also told her son that Teraaka the Elder would lose his catch and that’s the time when he should call him by his name.) Teraaka pulled his catch up and was about to hit the fish into the canoe when it fell off the hook into the sea and Teraaka the Younger yelled out, "Teraaka what have you done to your catch?" and Teraaka was very surprised, "How does he know my name? How could he know it?"

Then Kabaki offered to catch a fish for him and his catch also slipped, and Teraaka the Younger said, "Kabaki, what did you do to the fish?" Kabaki was surprised too, looked at his brother and said,
“Eh, how does he know our names?” They didn’t know that their unknown sister had told him everything about them.

Te Aroba said he would catch the fish and dropped his line. As he was about to hoist it up it too fell and Teraaka the Younger said,

“Te Aroba what have you done?” He too was taken aback and looked at his brothers, “He knows my name too”.

The fourth brother said,

“Don’t worry I’ll get him the fish” and as he lifted it, it too fell and Teraaka said,

“Te Manrin what happened? You can’t catch any fish.”

Manrin thought: “This boy knows all our names, what are we going to do about him? We shall trick him.”
Chapter 63a & b

**Teraaka the Younger catches his own Fish**

Teraaka saw how unsuccessful his uncles were and told them,

“Don’t worry I shall catch my own fish.”

As he put his line into the water he shouted,

“It has not been touched by Te Ibika-ni-karakara!” and the brothers were surprised to hear him utter the name of their lure and called out to him,

“Nao, come along!”

They wanted to take him to a place where they could kill him – the One Pole Hut – but first they had to trick him with the flying fishes (onaunti) as foretold by his mother. Suddenly flying fishes started to fall into his canoe in pairs. The brothers said amongst themselves,

“As soon as his canoe sinks from the weight of the fishes, we will bash him to death.”

Teraaka watched the fishes fall in and as soon as he thought there was enough for his sustenance on the trip home, he cut the umbilical cord off a pair scrambling at his feet. All of a sudden the rest of the flying fish dispersed singly and flew back into the sea.

(Originally flying fishes flew in pairs, attached by their umbilical cord, but they have been separated ever since Teraaka the Younger snapped it.)

The brothers said, “Oh he’s clever, he has stopped them flying in. Let’s trick him with the raewa-nei (a sting fish – *Plerois radiata*).

Teraaka was watching where he should turn his canoe and headed for Tanimainiku (on his way back from Tikurere) and before he reached the raewa-nei’s lair he turned his canoe around.

“Oh, he knows, he has turned around”.

And as he reached a shallow passage he lowered his sails. They enticed him to go to a bigger passage that contained huge clam shells – they were hoping he would walk into one of these, be trapped and then they would kill him but he took a different route.

(His mother had warned him about a woman who would block his way and push his canoe back into the sea and that he must unlock her hands off the canoe - the woman mentioned earlier, Nei Kanamakuna - and bash her head with his anchor – a rock – otherwise his uncles would catch him.)

As he was approaching the beach, the old woman Nei Kanamakuna ran down to meet him and told him to go back for that was the wrong passage. He ignored her and tried to release her hands off his canoe but she was steadfast and argumentative. He remembered his mother’s words and he picked up the rock and threw it at her head. She died and he pushed his canoe over her body up to the shore (like Matua Kikina and his brothers had done in Samoa to an old lady on the beach there).
The brothers said, “This boy is a murderer, we must kill him”.

They said to him, “Follow us, let us go to the village”

As he followed he tied the ends of the palm fronds across either side of the path, as was instructed by his mother. When he arrived in the village, Nei Akintai presented him with food and drink. Like Matua Kikina previously, he poured the drink over his head and the one for washing his head he drank and then hid the empty shell inside his kabae (a lavalava called te kamai – woven from whitened pandanus leaves). They then quizzed him with three questions,

“That coconut you drank, where did it come from?”

“From the branch of a coconut tree by the birds’ pond.”

“Aia”

“That babai you are eating?”

“From the pit situated northwest.”

“Aia”

“And the fish?” (Mon – Pricanthus genus)

“From the Well of Navigation.”

He answered all the questions correctly so he was safe this time. They then asked him,

“Will you go inside the One Pole Hut?”

“Yes I will enter it.”

As he entered they hit the stone pole and the roof collapsed trapping him inside, without any air getting in. He ran up the side to get his brother’s skull (Te Mataimoa) put it inside his lavalava and then threw the empty coconut shell against the stone pole. It made such a cracking noise that the brothers, standing outside, thought his lungs had burst and collapsed, they lifted the roof up and Teraaka emerged. They were so surprised to see him survive,

“You are such a clever boy; it is obvious you have been very well trained, would you go inside the hut with one hole in it?”

He agreed and stepped inside (the Hut of Night or Hut of Darkness built of rock). They lit a fire in front of what they thought was the only window, letting all the smoke go inside saying,

“That’s it, there’s no way he can escape this time.” But Teraaka knew there was another opening up the side of the roof.
Because Te Mataimoa the Younger did not survive, this meant that Nikunau, and its influences through Te Mataimoa the Elder, did not reach the North and the northern man (Teraaka the Younger) from Nei Manganibuka reached the North.

His uncles thought he was dead while he was watching them from the window above.

Suddenly he jumped out and landed nearby. His uncles could not believe that he was still alive,

“Oi, he’s running away, let’s chase him!” but he was too fast for them.

He went to the hole where his grandfather Te Bongiroro lived in the birds’ pond with his wife Nei Kamauarekea who said to him,

“So you are here Teraaka, I know that you have come to take your grandfather with you” (these people were all sorcerers and clairvoyants), “wait while I make Te Bongiroro as light as a ‘box of matches’ so that you can carry him”.

He lifted his grandfather across his shoulders and replied,

“That’s right, my mother asked me to take the Old Man my grandfather with me back to Nikunau”.

The four brothers waited at the entrance of the hole to catch him but while they were chatting he ran through between their legs. They saw him carrying their father and were even angrier,

“That’s it, now he’s got our father”, and gave chase but their feet were caught by the palm fronds that Teraaka had tied previously. They fell on the ground and their mother shouted at them,

“Why are you chasing him, don’t you know who he is?” and they asked,

“Who is he then?”

“He is the son of your sister Nei Manganibuka. You don’t know her because she was born while you were away taking Nei Akintai sailing”.

They called Teraaka back but he didn’t look back and he asked them to come and visit him in Nikunau.

At Nikunau Te Bongiroro had a special hut (kiaka) built for him and Teraaka the Younger often visited him there to listen to his tales.
Chapter 64a & b

Seeking Atake

After a while he asked his mother if there was another fishing ground and his mother replied,

“Yes, there is a place called Atake, but no one has ever returned from it. It is occupied by a giant bird called te man-aba (a roc). You may go there but let me prepare you first”.

Teraaka replied,

“Great, I’ll go” and after preparations that evening he left the next morning. After not seeing his grandson for a few days Te Bongiroro asked his daughter,

“Where is Teraaka the Younger?”

“He went to the fishing ground at Atake.”

“How long has he been gone for?”

“Oh about five days”

“Why didn’t you tell me before?”, “No matter, I shall ask Nei Tituabine to follow him”.

Teraaka went on his merry way towards Atake. Atake was situated at the end of a very strong current, like a sand bar in the middle of the ocean and a lone, huge itai tree grew on it. Te Bongiroro called Nei Tituabine (goddess of the seas, another inhabitant of Te Kaintikuaba) and she asked,

“What do you have in mind?” and Te Bongiroro replied,

“Please help me, go and protect my grandson Teraaka, he’s been gone nearly a week now.”

“Where has he gone?”

“To the fishing ground at Atake.”

Suddenly Nei Tituabine disappeared from his view and appeared sitting on the bow of Teraaka’s canoe,

“What are you thinking Teraaka going to this place?”

“Ne, I want to go to the fishing ground at Atake.”

“You know, no one has ever survived that place, but don’t worry, I shall protect you, when you reach that island, a huge bird would fly out before you arrive there at dawn and you will hear a cry – “I a kawa, I a kawa, I a kawa” (take pity on me, take pity on me) and that cry would become louder as the sun goes up and then the sea would become shaded but its not a cloud, it’s a shadow from the wings of that bird. You must hide from it under your anchor for it would lift up your canoe and drop it and then follow to see if you fall out but I shall keep your canoe afloat right side”.

Then she disappeared. Teraaka kept going for a few more weeks and then at dawn one morning he heard a plaintive cry, “I a kawa, I a kawa, I a kawa”

(just as he was told) which meant that the bird had just flown out waiting for sunrise. The cry became louder and louder as the sun got higher and then suddenly a dark shadow enveloped Teraaka’s canoe. He looked up and saw a great big bird above diving down at him so he hid under the anchor. The bird grabbed the canoe and took it up high into the clouds and then dropped it. Nei Tituabine supported it from underneath so it would not capsize. The bird did this two more times, higher each time and after dropping it the third time he grabbed the canoe and put it on its perch on the itai tree.

That night the bird returned to its perch and Teraaka was still hidden under the anchor.

Nei Tituabine said to him, “Come out and take the anchor with you, you’re going to tie the end onto the plumes on its back (borauea) and then anchor it to the itai tree, the plumes will be your transport back”.

Teraaka came out and saw how big the bird was, it was nearly as large as a maneaba and he said with concern, “What happens if it wakes up?” and Nei Tituabine replied,

“It won’t wake up, it’s going to think you’re a flea. Tie it up and then go back and hide under the anchor for the bird would break your canoe into smithereens”.

The bird woke up the next morning and cried out so loud “I a kawa” and as it flew off its plumes ripped off. He became extremely angry and broke the canoe into pieces but Teraaka was saved by Nei Tituabine and it flew off never to return. Nei Tituabine told Teraaka the coast was clear and to come out. What he saw before him was astounding: it was a mass grave of bones and skulls including huge whale bones, from whatever life form happened to pass the island of Atake.

Nei Tituabine said to Teraaka, “It’s time now for you to leave, the plumes will carry you wherever you want to go”.

Teraaka flew off on the plumes, almost like skiing in sky, until he sighted an island called Nauru (originally known as Onaero or Aba Oraora) and slowly steered his way towards land on the ocean side.
Chapter 65

Teraaka marries Nei Bubuea

He began to search for inhabitants and came across a young princess who was kept away in isolation – Nei Bubuea. (Her parents did not want her to have any contact with men. In the old days, before Teraaka arrived there, when a woman became pregnant, the baby was usually cut out of its mother’s womb so it survived and the mother died.) There were two women who performed this gruesome task, Nei Korokua and Nei Koromaete and the population could not increase on this island at that time. When the princess saw Teraaka she told him to go away,

“Nao, nao, you are not allowed to come near me, no man is allowed near me, my parents would kill any man that makes me pregnant!”

“Why is that?” and the princess replied,

“If I become pregnant I will die for they will take my baby from my womb and it will live”, and Teraaka said,

“Don’t worry about that, I shall stay with you and make you my wife!”

He then saw some ripe red pandanus fruits and took them to Nei Bubuea. She was afraid and angry (before Teraaka’s arrival the people here thought anything red was the eyes of spirits, they did not know how to use fires so all their food was eaten raw – hence the name Aba Oraora – land of raw food) He explained to her that it was not a ghost but something to be eaten, then lit a fire to bake it in and Nei Bubuea was even more scared at the sight of that for she thought the flames were the spirits’ eyes and the black smoke was their long black hair.

The people came to learn from Teraaka how to use fire for cooking. Eventually Bubuea became pregnant and she began worrying about giving birth. The two island midwives were keeping count of her months. In the ninth month Nei Korokua and Nei Koromaete arrived with their knife, half a foot long edged with sharks’ teeth, to wait for labour pains.

Teraaka told his wife, “As soon as your pains start, you must tell me so that we can go out somewhere”.

The women were well prepared; they were in their fineries with their bodies oiled and shiny as they waited. Nei Bubuea told her husband she was nearly ready and he took her out into the bush where he delivered their baby himself. Mother and baby both survived! They returned and the two midwives were gobsmacked when they saw that both Nei Bubuea and the baby survived. They searched under her armpits, in her mouth, in her eyes, in her ears; they were looking for where the baby came from!

Word began to reach Nei Bubuea’s parents that she survived and her father sent a group of young men to kill the two women. After that the population of Nauru (old Aba Oraora) began to increase and their lifestyle improved in so many other ways.
Chapter 66

Teraaka returns to Nikunau

After a few years Teraaka decided to go home to Nikunau so he built himself a canoe. He travelled with his wife leaving his son behind. Between Tamana and Arorae he saw the canoe of his uncles, Teraaka the Elder, Kabaki, Te Aroba and Te Manrin who came from Nakiroro in Butaritari in search of their father Te Bongiroro and Teraaka the Younger. They did not find Teraaka at Nikunau so decided to wait in this channel for him for they knew the currents would eventually bring him back this way. They recognized his sail and saw that he brought a woman with him. They called out,

“Noo, lower your sails down, where is that woman from?” Respectfully, Teraaka the Younger answered, “She’s from Aba Oraora, and she’s my wife”.

“Let us dive for her grass skirts” (they were being good uncles and very happy to have the opportunity to show they held their nephew’s wife in high esteem). They were diving for te kimarawa – a special kind of seaweed that was situated in the depths of the ocean below their canoes. Teraaka the Elder dived in but he and his brothers didn’t know that there were two currents going in opposite directions: the upper one went southwards, and the one below it travelled northwards.) He could not reach te kimarawa for he was first dragged by one current and then the other. He gave up and said; “Oh I couldn’t get it” so Kabaki dived in.

He too was pulled away by the opposing currents returning empty handed. The remaining uncles were unsuccessful as well and Teraaka the Younger was so embarrassed and lost face in front of his wife and said he would dive for his wife’s grass skirt himself. He dived straight down, knew exactly the movements of the currents and came back with te kimarawa.

“I managed to get my wife her grass skirt, why couldn’t you men you get it,” he said to his uncles, “come on, hoist your sails, let’s go”.

They went ahead of him and they were surprised to hear a big splash behind them. They looked back and saw that Nei Bubuea was thrown into the ocean. Teraaka in his great embarrassment because his uncles could not get his wife her grass skirt, pushed his wife overboard! The uncles asked him,

“Noo, what’s the matter, why have you done that to your wife?”

“I’m leaving her here as a reef (betia ni borau) and I shall make this place my fishing ground for bonitos and call it Te Ara Bungea”.

As she listed onto the ocean floor, there was lightning and Nei Bubuea became a white sand bar, one end facing Nikunau and the other facing the direction of Butaritari covered in birdlife (signifying lots of fish). Teraaka’s story ended here for he never returned to Nikunau. He sailed to unknown destinations.

His uncles went to Nikunau, picked up their father Te Bongiroro and took him back to Nakiroro village at Tanimainiku in Butaritari.

That has been the story of Teraaka the Younger and his Uncle Teraaka the Elder.

People of Nikunau have their own version of this story and insist there was only one Teraaka but they did not know there were two, one was the elder brother of Nei Manganibuka, Teraaka the Younger’s mother.
Their version is different from this, but this is the true story of Teraaka. Each island has its own stories and this is the story from Butaritari.

This is what I am saying to you listeners about these stories. These tapes belong to Rosa, daughter of Edward and Irima and she will take them back with her to Darwin, Australia.
Chapter 67a & b

Genealogy Part 2 and Part 3

To fill up the rest of this tape I shall build on the genealogy that I started previously but did not finish. This is how the rest of it goes:

From the Sky when the Sun was working its magic it created a man called Raure-ni-Ngaina (Break of Dawn - Sunrise) and his wife Nei Bo-ni-Mainiku (coming from the West - Sunset) and they produced Taukarawa (they were spirits).

Taukarawa (when the Uekera tree transported Nei Terieri up to the sky) and Nei Terieri produced Te Obaia te Buraerae (the Feathered) and

Te Obaia te Buraerae married Nei Katura at Onouna and they had Nei Kirirere.

Nei Kirirere married the son of Nei Kimoauea from Samoa (from previous story) and they produced Teboi and Nei Rakentai.

Nei Rakentai married Teimauri, from Tabiteuea South who came from Rairaueana te I-matang from Samoa.

Their children were: Natanga, (his elder brother Rairaueana had gone to Marshall Islands). He was the first king of Butaritari, (after Nei Rakentai brought him and his brother Mangkia in Rairaueana’s wake).

This is now our family tree from the spirit beings to the present day:

Natanga the first king produced Kakiaba.

Kakiaba fathered Teitiboniuea.

Teitiboniuea produced Teauoki.

Teauoki’s son Te Atumateatata became king after him as he was the eldest of his children from one of his many wives.

Teauoki also married Nei Bubura and they produced our grandfather, Na Buaka. He did not become king because he was a younger son.

Na Buaka produced Na Buatanga.

Na Buatanga produced Nan Tongo.

Nan Tongo produced Irima, Betero, Itabera, Ioane and Iakobo. That is our lineage from the Sky (Karawa).

Following is the other side of our family tree from Samoa, through Nei Kimoauea.

Nei Kimoauea became pregnant from Kirata’s towel and they produced Beia-te-Kamaaraia and his brothers.
Beia-te-Kamaraia married Te Obaia the Feathered’s daughter Nei Kirirere and produced Te Boi and Nei Rakentai.

Nei Rakentai married Teimauri and they produced Natanga (the first king of Butaritari) and then the rest follows:

King Natanga produced Kakiaba the second king,

Kakiaba produced Teitibonuea, the third king,

Teauoki followed, then his son Te Atumateatata (his story was of told how he was going to be assassinated and his half brother, Na Buaka assisted him in getting rid his cousins Na Abi and Na Buariki. (His mother Nei Bubura was responsible for anointing Kautuntebuka with the special oil – Nei Tinabaratia.)

Na Buaka produced Na Buatanga

Na Buatanga produced Nan Tongo

Nan Tongo married Nei Aonibai (of Makin and Abaiang) and they had four children: Irima, Betero, Itabera, Ioane and Iakobo

Irima married firstly Mr Edwards, an Australian and they had a son called Simon.

Simon married Caroline Greig of Beru, Fanning Island and Cook Islands and they produced:

Monica (married Tom Pickering of Fiji and Indonesia) – they live in Fiji

Children: Jimmy, Mary, Henry, Sissy, Billy, Caroline

Johnny (married Philomina [Biromina] Tatireta of Marakei) – reside in Kiribati

Children: George, Terry and adopted daughter Marian,

Twins: Hector and Victor, Hector died in childhood

Victor married firstly Olly Alick of Malaita, Solomon Islands

Children: Simon and Carol

Victor’s second wife – Veronica Abe (I-Kiribati in Solomon Islands)

Children: Frank, Hektor, Tyra and Margaret

Lavinia (married Peter Dreaver of Auckland, New Zealand)

Children: Barbara, Racheal and Andrew

David married Nei Kaka (in Kiribati)
Children: Teiti, Rota, Christopher, Margaret

Two with Monika Nabe

Hughie married Nei Tina (in Kiribati)

Children: Eddie, Bwenataake and two others

Irima (married Teken Tokataake, a descendant of King Binoka of Abemama)

Children: Rita, Wesley (Utiree) and Nitca

Also Carol Linda and Richard

Julia (married Gerd Wolfert of Germany) they reside in Germany

Children: Bernhard and Friedrick

Peter (married Christina Muller of Abemama [a descendant of King Binoka] Nonouti and Marshall Islands) – most of the family resides in Christmas Island, Kiribati

Children: Doroles, Teaa, Rodney and two others.

Willie lives in Kiribati

Ella passed away in 1989

Rinn married Roony Posada of the Philippines – live in Kiribati

Children: Mitchy, Teanau, Teresa, Peter, Simon and one other.

Later Irima married Boer (nicknamed Abo), a Chinese trader and their daughters were:

Elsie (married Tekarara Maxmillian Brechtefield of Abemama and they settled in Solomon Islands) Their children are:

Mary (married John Baurua of Solomon Islands)

Callista (married of Gold Coast, Australia)

Maxine Batitake (married ..Driscoll of Sydney, Australia)

Stella (married Philip Gibbs of New Zealand)

Christopher (married Nei Tue of Nauru)

Frida (married Tim Nolan of Cornwall, UK)
Christina (married Dr Turutana Tekaata of Onotoa). Their children are:

  Aribo
  Motiman

Ariera

Ioobu

Karuata

Itinibure

Raakaba

Tereere (married Timeon of Tabiteuea). Children are:

  Taberannang (married Nei Roko Riwata of Tamana)

  Children: Nei Lavender, etc

  Tom (married Nei Mary)

  Nei Katikutaake (married Henry Reiher)

  Children: Christina

  Nan Tongo

  Nei Teenako (NZ)

  Nei Meeri

  Irima

  Te Manikaoti

Ten Abo (Boer)

Tereere was brought up in Tabiteuea by two women who adopted her and she virtually spent all her adult life in Tabiteuea. She married Timeon from that island and they have numerous children and grandchildren. The eldest son Taberannang has been a Member of the Auti ni Maungatabu from Tabiteuea for a long time).
Betero married Nei Toua (from the equally illustrious family of Teaoti of Abaiang) and they produced Anterea (Nan Terea or Andrew) and Irima.

His sister Irima married Edward Muller (of Tarawa, Butaritari, Marshall Islands) who produced you Rosa, Bureteriki (Frederick), so many of you, Julia, you know the rest:

Clarence

Kautu Felix

Julia Ioria (England)

Bennett Tekura – first wife Janet Nonipitu (Solomon Islands)

  Children: Maurice Nonipitu

  With Nei Toka Timon – Stella

  Second wife – Rosia Tarakabu (I-Kiribati from Solomon Islands)

  Children: Cynthia, Philip, Rudy, Erma, Edwina, Bennett Jnr (BJ),

  Rosanne Nikiara, Saupo

Rosa – married Mark Norman (England)

  Children: Ashley and Alexander

May – with Itibo Tofinga – daughter Frances Van Gestel

  Married Jack Lai (Solomon Island Chinese)

  Children: Monica, Eddie, Lisa

Frederick (Bureteriki) – married Nei Babane Beniamina of Betio, Tarawa

  Children: William etc.

Lily Maria – daughter Touatati Elizabeth Mau’u

  Married Donald Gubbay of New Caledonia/Australia

  Children: Alan and Edward

Stephen – first wife: Nei Tikoro (half Tuvaluan/half I-Kiribati)

  Children: Michael and Paul (Solomon Islands), Daniel (Taniana), Peter, Paul, Annie, Kevin (Kiribati)
Second wife:

Let me explain the issues of Nei Itabera. She married Na Matakobu and these are her children:

Nei Kaotirake – she married Tiare (Charlie) Yee On

Na Uruaata married Nei Tabeka-makin

Na Ibebure married Nei Moti.

Nei Kaotirake’s children are now scattered on Tarawa:

Nei Tebwebwenikai,

Nei Abana, and there are some on Butaritari,

Nei Teroti at Tarawa,

Nei Teemari and

Nei Temari,

(they are all half Chinese this lot through their Chinese father.
On Butaritari at Tabei there is Nei Raibwebwe and others.

Na Uruaata and Nei Tabeka-makin produced:

Nan Tokura (he works overseas as an able bodied seaman),
many have died but some have survived including another Nan Tongo.

Na Ibebure and Nei Moti produced

Na Iekimaa,
Nang Kaateti – he was murdered.
Nei Kakateiti, and many on Tarawa as well.

The children of Na Ioane, my father, are:

yours truly, the most handsome of his children Nan Tinaua 😊,

my elder brothers Nan Teburabura (and Na Atuntoa)

Nan Teburabura’s children with his wife Nei Angitaake are:

Nan Tautara and
Nei Rian-aa.

Nei Angitaake was originally married to my other brother Na Atuntoa and they had:

Na Ata-ni-mareve (who died when his leg was chopped off from a motor bike accident),

Nei Takoua,

Nam Bwebwere,

Na Manuera,

Na Rewiin,

Nan Teinaura,

Nan Tetaake.

Na Atuntoa had lots of children and he died when the children were young. They are all doing fine now by finding good jobs or marrying well!

Myself (the best looking one☺️), I married Nei Mone, my eldest is

Nei Tematang, she married Nam Betero and they live on Bikati,

Na Uri (Willie, he works for Air Kiribati) after him

Na Uriam (William, he also works for Air Kiribati) on Tarawa,

Na Maungaunga comes next, (he’s a teacher at a primary school on Butaritari) and a girl comes next

Nei Maryanne, she currently (year 2004) goes to secondary school at EBS (Elaine Bernacchi School – a government boarding school on Tarawa) and the last is Nei Teaba.

Nei Teaba, my baby, is the cheekiest and naughtiest. She has inherited the characteristics of our ancestors from Tokamauea (another of our kainga on Butaritari).

More will be added to this genealogy as further information is supplied by interested family members.

The End